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The Antioch Review

Volume Seven · · · · Fall 1947 · · · · Number Three

. . . *Featuring* . . .

STALEMATE IN WASHINGTON
—N. A. Pelcovits

JOHN STEINBECK, CALIFORNIAN
—Freeman Champney

HUMANISM *and* WORLD TENSIONS
—Oliver L. Reiser

THORSTEIN VEBLEN—MORALIST
—Daniel Aaron

WHAT PRICE OUR FEDERAL DEBT
—Edgar E. Poulton

Short Stories By Sam Elkin and Edith Tarcov

Other Articles by Louis Filler, Stanley Edgar Hyman, Gaetano Salvemini, Charles I. Glicksberg, John S. Gambs, William D. Grampp.

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The ANTIOCH REVIEW

"Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?"

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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STALEMATE IN WASHINGTON

by N. A. PELCOVITS

On the day following the Republican landslide of last November, Senator J. William Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, advised President Truman to appoint a Republican Secretary of State and resign in his favor. Some of the country's leading administration newspapers urged a similar step as a means of transferring responsibility to the party which had received the "popular mandate" and, although the President rejected this invitation to commit political suttee, the seriousness with which the suggestion was debated revealed how widespread had become national concern over the prospect of a deadlocked governmental machine in Washington. With a beaten Democratic administration in the White House and a triumphant Republican majority on Capitol Hill two years of stalemate and legislative paralysis was the grim anticipation. Despite appeals to bipartisan co-operation and assurances from the President that he would pursue a policy of national interest, it has become more and more evident that the two branches of government are actually at war. Republican chieftains have scarcely hidden their intent to fashion the legislative program without administration interference; on its side of the avenue, the White House has waited for the country to become impatient with Republican fumbling of its self-chosen issues, meanwhile drafting veto messages with the best vote-appeal for 1948. Out of this situation deadlock is the end result.

If it were true that government which governs least governs best, this prospect of legislative sclerosis would not be too frightening. But one need not be a political sophisticate to know that by the end of the first session problems of industrial strife, of housing, of maintaining current levels of production and employment, as well as those of implementing the peace, should convince the most rugged individualist that the positive state is here to stay. If the "coming depression" materializes in the next few months, murmurs from the grassroots and city-sidewalks will not be stilled by appeals to the spirits of Adam Smith and Calvin Coolidge. As the deadlock between White House and Capitol continues and as month follows

month in protracted stalemate, frantic voices will be lifted calling for the reform of a constitutional system which allows our governmental machinery to stall at the most crucial times. The great constitutional debate will be on.

Foreseeing this development publicists and political scientists have for many months been blueprinting the changes which must be effected in the American constitutional machinery if President and Congress are to work together as a team. For example, Senator Fulbright has suggested that a special election be held to determine the popular mandate whenever a President is repudiated in midterm Congressional elections. Another plan, urged most notably by Senator Hatch of New Mexico, would extend the Congressional term to four years, thus having it coincide with that of the President. In more academic circles the suggestion has been mooted that the President be given the power to dissolve Congress and appeal to the electorate for a vote of confidence whenever the two branches become deadlocked in unresolved conflict.

Whatever the intrinsic merit of such proposals—which I shall consider more fully below—one thing is certain: their adoption will not solve the problem of stalemate in Washington. Tinkering with the constitutional mechanism will not remedy what ails us. The basic fallacy behind all proposals that we approximate the virtues of the parliamentary system is the implication that only a "technical defect" (the quote is from a recent book on the subject) in our constitutional system is responsible for the legislative impasse in Washington. This is a vain and shallow interpretation. For, deadlock in our federal structure is entrenched behind a defense in depth and its reduction on one front alone would not achieve its defeat.

My argument is this: the American political structure is so designed that governmental stalemate occurs on three separate levels. When the *opposition party* controls Congress it tends to frustrate administration leadership; this is the first and most obvious source of stalemate. But, in addition, we are *constitutionally* hobbled. Even when party allegiance is shared, antagonism between President and Congress is chronic. Under a system of separation of powers each jealously guards his independence and, except during the honeymoon period of a vigorous administration, the executive and the legislature act as though they belonged to opposing teams.

But underlying these structural weaknesses is the bottom or *political level* of conflict which serves as the real foundation of stalemate. Deadlock is inherent in the American political system because the American political party, whether disguised as elephant or donkey, can never make up its mind which way to go. As a coalition of conflicting interests and a political machine of checks and balances it is itself the primary cause of governmental paralysis. This political struggle, too often attributed to "sectional" conflict, represents not so much geographic or ideological differences as economic stresses. And this factor is becoming more pronounced: as government is more intimately associated with the economic process and taxation takes a larger share of national income, the exercise of political power comes to be regarded by socio-economic pressure groups as a prize well worth capture. Today one need hardly emphasize that the direction of politics is determined by the changing balance of power between politically articulate interest-groups. It is the attempt by our major parties to discover a common denominator for the resulting coalition of disparate and conflicting interests which produces what I have termed the "political" level of stalemate.

Reform is needed on all three levels if stalemate is to be overcome.

II

Stalemate on the first level is familiar enough. Never in American history has a President been able to provide legislative leadership or do more than serve an honorific function when confronted by a hostile majority in Congress. It is not a matter of personality. There will be those in the coming period of paralysis who will say that the fault lies with Truman the man. Such nostalgia is comforting but vain. Every President faced with an opposition Congress has given the appearance of ineptitude. John Quincy Adams was the first to suffer this fate when the election of 1826 returned a hostile majority to Congress bent on hamstringing the executive. The administration's measures were scorned, the President's messages disregarded; and Congress wasted two years holding an inquest into the conduct of the executive.

Nor is this condition uncommon. Between the end of the Civil War and the coming of Franklin Roosevelt one or both houses of Congress was in the hands of the anti-administration party for a period of more

than thirty years. From 1870 until the McKinley administration every midterm election but one returned an opposition majority to Capitol Hill. Stalemate was normal. Hayes was forced to use the veto power seven times against a Democratic Congress determined to foster sectional interests by attaching riders to the appropriation bill. This state of deadlock was renewed in 1910 under Taft and again in 1918 when Wilson's spirit was broken by Republican repudiation of his foreign commitments. Perhaps the sorriest spectacle of all was offered by the sterile period of 1930-32 when Congress and President Hoover waited out the first two years of the depression in sullen antagonism.

The Fulbright and Hatch amendments, outlined above, are designed to remedy this condition by ensuring that the same party controls both arms of the government. Certainly no valid argument has been advanced against the proposal that the terms of President and Congress coincide; and the sooner it is adopted the better. But this alone will not prove to be the panacea for our governmental ills. Despite party identity President and Congress will inevitably tend to feud over program and leadership as they have in the past.

Governmental fission, as every schoolboy is reverently taught, is enshrined in the Constitution; along with federalism it serves as the very foundation of the American system. This constitutional cleavage has resulted in chronic antagonism between the two branches of government except during the early days of a strong administration. Nor is it the personality of the President that determines the degree of hostility. Certainly no man could have been more eager to get along with Congress than President Truman; and the sympathy and good will generated on Capitol Hill during the spring of 1945 pointed towards a happy union. What actually happened? By October the President was accusing a coalition led by Southern Democrats of conspiring to frustrate his legislative program, and by December he had lost all the Congressional love so fervently declared in May. Was it lack of dynamism or personal deficiency that produced this result? Hardly. For it is pertinent to recall that the situation was no easier before Roosevelt's death. As Floyd M. Riddick has noted: "The strained relations between Mr. Roosevelt and Congress had been growing increasingly tense during the last several years; it is probable that only the defense program eliminated the possibility of a complete break between the two arms of the government."

The point is simply that neither a "strong" President nor an accommodating one can overcome Congressional recalcitrance even when his own party enjoys a majority on the Hill. Our design for government produces the confusion that would result if automobiles were furnished with an extra steering wheel for the back-seat driver. Although it is now granted that Congress cannot provide leadership out of its own ranks and that the President must act as chief legislator (as well as chief executive), it is only in brief periods that he is the real master of the legislative body as is the British Prime Minister. This means that the most important function of an "administration," that of formulating national policy and giving direction to legislation, can be performed by an American President only in an extra-constitutional manner.

To meet this need for leadership and legislative control every President has been forced to study "the art of bringing the several parts of government into effective co-operation," which Woodrow Wilson defined as the supreme task of American statesmanship. Although it was specifically banned by the rule book every effective President has called the signals from the White House and determined who should carry the ball. As Professor Binkley has demonstrated, this accomplishment is the real history of the presidency, though it is rarely taught in American schools.

How has this been accomplished? There was an early try by Alexander Hamilton to provide "ministerial leadership" by having Cabinet members serve as legislative leaders on the floor of Congress. The Treasury Act of 1789 had apparently contemplated some such arrangement with the provision that the Secretary of the Treasury report directly to Congress and it was Hamilton's intention that this officer would shape policy through his fiscal program and by assuming Cabinet leadership. When the "ministerial system" was bitterly opposed by the Jeffersonian Republicans, executive leadership was forced into subterranean channels. As leader of the Federalists, Hamilton ruled Congress through the legislative caucus which proved to be the first form of party control. Despite the pretense of the opposition that Congress needed no external leadership, Jefferson was the first President to employ party leadership as an effective instrument of control over Congress. As the unchallenged chief of the Republicans he was able to co-ordinate policy through the use of backdoor influence in Congress ("intrigue" his opponents called it) and

by placing his lieutenants in key committee positions. To this Jeffersonian design Andrew Jackson added the motifs of patronage and of direct appeal to the electorate over the heads of its Congressional representatives. He thus completed the formula of the three P's—patronage, party discipline, and popular appeal—which allowed American Presidents to fill the gap in the Constitution by providing extra-constitutional leadership.

The idea of external leadership was seized upon by all subsequent holders of the office—except the Buchanans and Coolidges who abdicated all pretense to leadership and even denied its need. The mildest of Whig Presidents, elected on a platform of Congressional supremacy, did not retreat entirely from this advanced position. "Tippecanoe" Harrison reminded the Whig hierarchs that he was still their chief. Tyler was so insistent on filling the role of chief legislator that his own party led the movement for his impeachment, while James Polk served his term in constant conflict with Congress over this issue. By Lincoln's day these pioneers had so securely established the claim of the presidency to legislative leadership that it needed only a master personality to give it dramatic effect.

Thus, for the past century two motifs have governed the relations of Congress and President. On the one hand, Congress has consistently exhibited jealousy of its constitutional independence, insisting that it alone makes the laws. Often it has preferred deadlock to "outside" dictation from the White House. On the other hand, all the Presidents whose names come readily to American lips have advanced the frontier of presidential leadership, constantly refining the extra-constitutional tools of patronage, party pressure, and appeal to the public. Wilson and the two Roosevelts were particularly adept at this art. Following Jefferson they all sought the real center of power in Congress and allied themselves with it; following Jackson they realized that positive leadership meant both party control and popularity with the electorate.

III

The formula of the three P's has worked fairly well in the past. But critics now assert that it is too uncertain and clumsy an instrument for the age of the atom bomb and the forty billion dollar budget. Even the masters of the presidency have not always found it easy to run the obstacle

course which the Constitution sets up along Pennsylvania Avenue. The threat of Congressional revolt has too often dulled the edge of presidential leadership. And while in the past we could afford to tolerate a recalcitrant Congress bucking a Tyler or Hayes, government has become too serious a proposition to be subjected to the danger of recurrent paralysis. Collaboration between executive and legislature, always essential, has become vital to the safety and welfare of the nation.

The movement for constitutional reform has been gaining popularity and the drive behind it is by no means confined to the radical editors of liberal weeklies. On the contrary, the most revolutionary changes are being advocated by the most conservative lawyers and publicists. Proceeding from the premise that only a technical defect in the Constitution prevents teamwork in Washington, they propose to redesign our governmental mechanism on the British parliamentary pattern. In addition to making the terms of Congress and President coincide, the chief reform proposed would give the President power to dissolve the legislative branch and call for new elections to determine the "popular mandate" whenever Congress and administration differ over a major policy issue. Most recently argued by Thomas K. Finletter in *Can Representative Government Do the Job?,* this proposal has had academic backing for some years under the leadership of Professor W. Y. Elliott and has enjoyed the support of many right of center publicists, including Henry Hazlitt. Many veteran Washington newspapermen, notably Richard Strout of the *Christian Science Monitor,* are convinced of the vital need for such reform.

Amendment of the Constitution would, of course, be required, and despite the contention of Mr. Finletter that "none of the basic institutions of the American political system would be touched," most Americans would probably be convinced that a major constitutional revolution was being planned. As indeed it would be. Adoption of the parliamentary scheme would result in the passing of the Senate into the Valhalla reserved for upper houses, a condition not blithely welcomed under a federal system where states' rights are more than legal abstractions. Even more, the power of dissolution would give the President dictatorial control over Congress without making him directly responsible to it as is the case in Britain or Canada. His Cabinet would become the masters of the legislative process supplanting the indigenous and responsible leaders of Congress.

Convinced that such a constitutional revolution would prove unacceptable, another school of thought maintains that the same end—collaboration between the two branches of government—can be served more economically by streamlining the existent machine. The report of the La Follette-Monroney Committee, which was partly translated into law by legislation remodelling Congressional organization and providing for joint House-Senate review of the budget, centered attention on the possibility of overcoming stalemate without constitutional amendment. Most of the plans submitted can be traced back to the original Hamiltonian intention of having the Cabinet serve in a ministerial capacity to guide the legislative process on the floor of Congress. This Federalist revival can be spotted clearly in the scheme advanced by the editors of *Fortune* which would reorganize the executive so as to center responsibility for a co-ordinated national policy in the chief Cabinet officers. The Secretary of State, under this plan, would exercise jurisdiction over national security and international affairs, while the Secretary of the Treasury would employ expanded control of fiscal policy to direct the entire domestic program. In effect, the latter would act as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House, establishing fiscal policy and guiding legislation. Through a central fiscal bureau and a central administrative office the Treasury Department would co-ordinate the administration's legislative program which the Secretary would spearhead through Congress.

Along the same lines is the revival of the so-called Pendleton Plan, first advanced in 1881 and reintroduced into the 79th Congress by Representative Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, requiring the attendance of Cabinet members on the floor of Congress during question periods and permitting them to participate in debate. As a young student of political science Woodrow Wilson favored the plan and it was urged, in modified form, by President Taft. More recently it has been suggested that current co-ordination between the two branches in the field of foreign policy through the joint State Department-Congress Committee be extended to cover the entire field of national policy. This proposal would create a Joint Executive-Legislative Cabinet responsible for over-all direction of administration policy, thus achieving the purposes of parliamentary Cabinets.

IV

These and similar proposals will be presented to the American public with increasing persuasion during the coming months of stalemate in Washington. If they are directed simply at reducing friction in the governmental process they may well be justified on their individual merits. But it is all too likely that no such modest claims will be made for these specifics. Rather they will be advanced as prescriptions for ending the chronic affliction of governmental paralysis inherent in our constitutional system. All in vain. For we are faced with much more than a constitutional crisis which can be resolved by discovering the right constitutional formula. It is not merely governmental fission from which we suffer. At bottom the cause of recurring deadlock, the reason for lack of co-ordination and direction in the governmental process can be traced to a basic political weakness: the make-up of the American political party.

Ultimately government in a democracy can look for guidance and co-ordination to one source alone—the political party victorious at the polls; but this implies that the political party represents a program and not simply a label. The most tragic thing about American politics today is that we have no such organization on a national scale. Ultimately government in a democracy cannot operate without the driving force of party discipline and party commitment to legislative policy which defines it in the mind of the electorate. Today, as always in American history, our major parties seek their strength in discovering the common denominator of glittering generalities. Each party is a coalition of interest groups—sectional, racial, economic and emotional—and a conglomeration of factions which cancel each other out. As Madison foresaw, by taking in so many diverse interests it becomes almost impossible to secure a working majority for vigorous governmental action. Given this fatal flaw in party organization the American electorate has no means of expressing its mandate to Washington. Stalemate is inherent in such a system.

Since the very beginning of American history the two dominant parties have consisted of combinations of interest groups, united not by devotion to program but by a shaky alliance dependent on not offending vested interests or sectional sensibilities. To undertake a positive reform program was a risky adventure which smart politicians would try to avoid. The centrifugal force of sectionalism made party discipline a weak

bond and it is the absence of cohesion on this political level, not the separation of powers on the constitutional, which is the root cause of legislative paralysis. What Professor Howard Lee McBain said twenty years ago still holds true: "No change to the parliamentary system in America would alter our social and economic sectionalization."

Reformers who prescribe the parliamentary cure for what ails us overlook the fact that the parliamentary machine works only because of the cohesive force of party discipline. The back-bench rebellion against the Labor Government's foreign policy in the British House of Commons last fall was contained by the threat of party leaders to impose sanctions against rebels who insisted on airing major differences outside of closed meetings of the parliamentary party. For without discipline there is no party and without party there is neither leadership nor co-ordination in the process of government. But discipline is effective only where party representatives are united on a concrete program to which the electorate has given its mandate; the issue of limited socialism on which the electoral campaign of July 1945 was fought in Britain is an example.

Broadly speaking the British or Canadian voter does not elect the man but the party; and thereby his vote can possess meaning. He does not cast his ballot for a local post office or a specific tariff; still less does he cast his vote for one man because his opponent was once divorced. This is not because the citizen of Manchester is politically more mature than his opposite number in Memphis or Chicago, but simply because he is given the opportunity of indicating by his allegiance to a party the way he wants his government run. The American voter has no such choice. If his party achieves victory he can never be certain what that means when the sum total of representatives is added up in Washington. Unable to vote for a man committed to a defined program, the American voter is in effect disfranchised. Whatever he marks on the ballot will result in the return of a coalition government to office, uncommitted and uncoordinated, without leadership and without program. This is not to say that the vote is wasted, but that it can never be a "mandate" in the parliamentary sense.

In 1936, for example, an overwhelming majority of the electorate returned to Washington for the second time a Democratic administration committed to an extension of the New Deal. Everybody had a fairly

precise idea of what that meant in terms of national program; that was apparently what the electorate desired. At the same time, however, there was returned from the South and from boss-ridden cities of the North representatives who bore the party label but vigorously opposed the program. With what result? In a matter of months the President who had received the most convincing popular mandate in American history was fighting his own party leaders over the crucial issues of administrative and judicial reform. Would dissolution and a new election have changed the balance? Not one whit. Another election in 1937, nominally fought on those issues would have been without significance. Once again local interests and sectional loyalties would have decided who took the train to Washington. Nor are the Republicans more closely knit so long as they count among their number not only Colonel McCormick and the Ohio Senators but also Wayne Morse and Irving Ives and the New England Senators. Intra-party differences over tax reduction, rent control, the reciprocal trade agreements and the general welfare program indicate that the centrifugal forces among the Republicans are no less serious than among the Democrats.

To secure party discipline attempts have been made to purge dissident Congressmen; but without signal success. The purge is not a wanton weapon of dictation as some have complained, but results from the imperative need of giving unity and responsibility to the party in power. Wilson's appeal to the electorate in 1918 to return administration supporters who would back the peace he had fashioned was such an attempt: it failed. Roosevelt's intervention in the elections of 1938 had the more decided purpose of making the Democratic label and New Deal voting synonymous; it was only partly successful. Truman was able to force the rejection of Representative Slaughter in his home constituency, but he did not venture to repeat the appeal for New Deal supporters during the 1946 election. Other forms of sanction have been suggested, most notably that of Henry Wallace when, as a member of the Administration, he urged that "unless a member of a majority party in Congress votes in favor of major issues upon which he and other members of his party were elected" he should be denied the plums of committee appointments.

This aim is noble. But all such sanctions and appeals are bound to fail for the simple reason that a Congressman will continue to be loyal not to

the party but to the man, group, interest or section that elected him. Foreign students of American government are immediately struck by this anamoly in our political life and are agreed with D. W. Brogan that "transcendence of sectionalism is the most urgent need of American politics." So long as candidate and voter act as though local interests are of overriding importance, the disrupting force of sectionalism will continue to make government in Washington a weak, disorganized and inefficient instrument.

The power of dissolution would, under the circumstances, make no difference. Take a test case. The maintenance of price controls was a major issue in the spring of 1946 when the Democrats held a comfortable majority in the House. Yet on the Wolcott amendment which aimed a serious blow at the price-control program eighty-nine Democrats voted with the opposition to pass the crippling amendment 259 to 137. This was not a minor rebellion but a principal difference over policy. An appeal to the electorate, however, could not have resulted in a clear-cut decision for there had been no cleavage along party lines and the return of the Democrats could hardly have been interpreted as more of a victory for price control than for its removal. There was no way in which the electorate could express its will.

If this analysis is accurate then stalemate in Washington can never be overcome until there is a major realignment of American political parties. Only a recasting of political forces which gives national meaning to party allegiance can bring coherence in policy and effective leadership. But such a reformation will not occur until the electorate is taught by the hard facts of economic depression and legislative paralysis, that it can no longer afford to waste its voting strength on local issues and sectional jealousies. This may be a long process since particular interests and prejudices continue to exercise decisive influence on the American mind —but it is bound to happen. No people will for long contemplate the spectacle of a do-nothing government nursing its frustrations during a national crisis. Realignment is inevitable.

It has been argued that no basic realignment can take place so long as the American people refuse to divide politically along class lines. But this criticism is pointless; the political struggle in a democracy is never simply a reflection of class struggle. To survive, parties in a democracy

must obey two laws. In the first place they must realize, as Lord Balfour pointed out, that they cannot differ over the social and constitutional fundamentals upon which a country is based and still remain political parties. This means that the loser in a political battle will not take to the barricades. At the same time, however, parties to survive must express real difference over policy and program so that the electorate has a real choice. In America this adds up to the following prospect: purged of their sectional emphases and with the accent on national interests, the major parties must offer a choice to right or left of center, principally on domestic issues. Concretely this can be boiled down to the emphasis which each will place on the use of the taxing power to regulate the economic system for the "general welfare," which each will define in its own way. While rejecting class cleavage and holding fast to individual liberties, the American political party must be so reorganized on a national basis as to offer the voter a real choice on this issue.

The American voter can no longer afford the luxury of voting "independent"; if his vote is to count he must be given the opportunity of casting it for a party committed. Otherwise he will continue to get coalitions in Washington which can perhaps check tyranny and compromise conflict but cannot run a government which needs to go places. And until stalemate is broken on this political level, constitutional change will prove fruitless. There is no royal road to efficient government which bypasses party reconstruction. This is the first step in ending stalemate in Washington.

AMERICA AND THE "USABLE PAST"

by LOUIS FILLER

> *It is when the sentimentalist turns preacher of morals that we investigate his character, and are justified in so doing. He may express as many and as delicate shades of feeling as he likes, . . . but the moment he undertakes to establish his feeling as a rule of conduct, we ask at once how far are his own life and deeds in accordance with what he preaches? For every man feels instinctively that all the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action; and that while tenderness of feeling and susceptibility to generous emotions are accidents of temperament, goodness is an achievement of the will and a quality of the life.*
>
> —JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL,
> "Rousseau and the Sentimentalists"

ONE WONDERS IF, half a dozen years ago, Stewart H. Holbrook's latest book[1] would have seemed quite as exciting an event as, apparently, his publishers now think it, and as this reviewer finds it. Imagine a typical prewar publisher's advertising man, and give him any personal opinions you chose—perhaps those of the editor of a large publishing firm, a liberal, as the phrase went, who confided to me that everything that had ever been written was dead, "unless it's by Charles Dickens, or somebody like that." Imagine this advertiser sitting at his desk, revolving between it and the window and cudgeling his brain for copy about Mr. Holbrook's *Lost Men of American History*. "Did you know," he might have thought aloud, "that the Battle of Lexington was *not* won by the Continental troops? That the world's first submarine was floated during the Revolution? That the invention of the Colt revolver . . . now let me see, what about the invention of the Colt revolver?"

Our advertiser might have decided to change the subject. Having in his mind's eye a half-page spread in the *New York Times Book Review*, he might have tentatively illustrated it with a tombstone on which were

---

[1]Stewart H. Holbrook, *Lost Men of American History*. Macmillan, 1946. $3.50.

chiseled the features of a bearded man, and surmounted it (still in his mind's eye) with the simple words, "This is Joseph Palmer." But it takes more words to explain that Palmer went to jail for wearing a beard at a time when almost no one else in America did, thus precipitating a stirring battle for civil rights; and in the meantime that famous person, the General Reader, might wander off to other literary pastures. Our publisher's man might desperately have decided to abandon Palmer and his beard for another approach. "Who," he might have asked the surrounding air, "created the business of selling ice in tropical climates? Name the man who standardized the American language? Who built the Soo Canal? Who," he might have concluded in a burst of exasperation, "cares? This is 1940; we are in the eleventh year of the worst depression in history, and this man Holbrook wants us to read about dead men. 'Lost' ones, at that."

To be sure, 1940 was, approximately, the year when American history was being "rediscovered" by publicists and others. It was revealed that life with father had not been entirely obnoxious, and that "Tom" Jefferson had contributed a thought or two still worth repeating. But this "rediscovery" no more than emphasized how divorced from the past Americans had become. A generation had attained consciousness which bore about the same relationship to its elders that second generation immigrants traditionally have to theirs. The so-called "lost generation" of the 1920's was not really a generation, and only represented an extreme case of alienation from its national roots, but its literature and the popularity it enjoyed serve as one indicator of what had happened since World War I.

All this is, in a sense, an old story. We are all good Americans now. From now on, we say, our criticism of American life will be constructive. Our intentions are honorable, we affirm. But how are we to manifest them? If it was a fault to drift so far from the mainstream, we must, somehow, return to it. But how are we to find our way to it, and by what token will we know that we have come home? We cannot all be historians, thank God. Also, a flair for history will *not* necessarily insure us a progressive social approach. It so happens that some very good American historians have been, and some possibly still are, crass conservatives. Finally, the lessons history teaches are not always clear. The Civil War, for example, is as perplexing a subject today as it was eighty years ago;

more so, in some ways. History can be used, but it cannot substitute for strength and intelligence.

As a matter of fact, history as a science (or, better still, as an art) is in competent hands. Thus, the "lost" men, and women, of American history, of whom Mr. Holbrook writes so well and so entertainingly, are not really lost, after all. Some of them, like Samuel Adams, are the exact opposite of lost. Works are also available in abundance about Elihu Burritt, "the learned blacksmith" and peace leader, Eli Whitney, Frederick Douglass, Horace Greeley, Dorothea Dix, and many, many others sung by Mr. Holbrook who are as picturesque as Private Deborah Sampson, the only woman to receive a soldier's pension from the government, and who are as central to our understanding of this country as Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the ethnologist. Many of the smaller historical figures have, for various reasons, been studied more than they deserve. There have been ambitious histories prepared about all the periods Mr. Holbrook treats in past and modern times. For example, we learn from Mr. Holbrook's bibliography that as late as 1932, C. C. Regier wrote on *The Era of the Muckrakers,* some of the chief characters of which Mr. Holbrook treats as "forgotten" men. He might argue that they are not so widely known as they ought to be. But how much specialized information can a lay person reasonably carry? How much of George Washington's career is commonly appreciated, and for how much of it can a nonprofessional citizen be held responsible?

The problem implicit in Mr. Holbrook's work is not of the relative importance of one or another historical figure or episode, but of our general attitude toward the American past. We have, undoubtedly, viewed it without appetite. The question is whether we have erred in doing so. We need not give lip-service to the past. Either it is useful, or it isn't. Either it helps us live better, more fully, more in accordance with the aims we profess, or it doesn't. And if it doesn't, we might just as well forget it.

I think that our new interest in the American past is still abstract, and of the head only. We concede that we should know more about it; we are willing to read bastardized fictions about it; but we are still unclear about how it can be used. In part, we are still chained to the vicious and contemptible theory of the "usable" American past—that attractive and delusive phantom. It was vicious because it persuaded a host of people

that they knew enough. It was contemptible because those who played with, as we shall see, very serious concepts, did so at no expense to themselves and (while continuing to abuse their opponents as soulless and unscrupulous time-servers) never hesitated to change their own opinions when it suited them to do so. This, I think, a glance at the files of the *Dial,* the *Seven Arts,* the *Masses,* and the *New Masses,* among other periodicals, will readily show.

The theory of the "usable" past need not have been vicious. Holger Cahill, when Director of the Federal Art Project, was very fond of referring to it while advertising his distinguished Index of American Art enterprise. The American past can be used, he proclaimed. Old designs, old furnishings, old materials of every kind have beauty, have purpose, and can stimulate creative thinking in the present. And they can; let anyone say otherwise who has inspected the thousands of designs which Art Project workers beautifully copied in every section of the country, and which are now preserved in the National Art Gallery.

There can be no doubt, however, that the formal exponents of the "usable past" theory did not mean this at all. They meant that America was dull, barren, repulsive, and that only here and there a gleam of truth or beauty might be discerned; and that this, and only this, could be saved and made "usable" out of all the morass of materialistic rubbish which was America. Something of Emerson, something of Thoreau, a wisp of Poe, and such-like items in the field of literature, a few scraps more in other fields, made up all of the "usable" American past that there was. They would have found nothing to praise in Mr. Holbrook's grim history of Charles T. Harvey and the building of the Soo Canal—a monument, they would have said, to America's force and energy, but not, God help her, to her spiritual ascent. Hear Mr. Van Wyck Brooks on this subject:

> Those interminable facts about the tariff, the growth of industry, the winning of the West, mechanical facts, romantic facts—is there anything to choose between them after one has passed the cowboy-and-Indian stage and has not yet arrived at the stage where dollars and cents comprise the whole of life?[2]

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[2]Van Wyck Brooks, *Sketches in Criticism* (1932), p. 120.

And again:

> We know too well how fully justified were most of the European travellers' reflections on our old social life—which used to cause such resentment in American breasts; they were [no more] malignant . . . than the comments of the European critics and scholars . . . who looked upon "Americanism" as a poisonous growth that might well infect and destroy all civilization. And as we observe the complacency to which our national optimism gave birth, we ask ourselves whether this optimism was ever a symptom of health, whether it was not indeed the symptom of a great evil: the loss of a clear sense of the true values of life.[3]

Mr. Brooks has, of course, become more benign in his attitude toward American life if one may judge from those thin passages in his later books, which relate to American life as distinguished from literature. It might be stated here that, in my opinion, Mr. Brooks' reputation will rest upon his early studies, hard, narrow, and bigoted though they were, rather than upon the soft, undiscriminating work of his second phase. *America's Coming-of-Age, The Ordeal of Mark Twain,* and other volumes are landmarks. They help explain much that happened in the zero hours before and after World War I. They are filled with high ardor and a noble hunger for standards. But when we examine their character, as it were, in the way recommended by Lowell in his essay on Rousseau, we discover that there is no performance, only promise. Mr. Brooks' works reveal a keen sensibility, a deep appreciation of some art and artists; but they lack all human motive and responsibility. They lack roots.

II

Now roots are precisely what Mr. Charles A. Madison seeks in his *Critics and Crusaders,*[4] which is particularly pertinent because it strives for a social approach to American history and represents considerable work in the bargain. It employs, also, a modern version of the "usable past" theory, and exemplifies the ends to which it can be diverted. Mr. Madison's book provides a gallery of worthies ranging from William Lloyd Garrison to John Reed, and including abolitionists, utopians, anarchists, "dissident economists," "militant liberals," and socialists, if

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[3] *Idem,* pp. 12-13.

[4] Charles A. Madison, *Critics and Crusaders: A Century of Protest.* Henry Holt, 1947. $3.50.

Reed can be considered a socialist. The panel is calculated to suggest to the reader the various approaches to social problems which have been taken by lovers of the beautiful and true. Background chapters introduce the different categories of protestants. Mr. Madison frankly admits that he has made no effort to do original research. The value of his book, presumably, lies in the fact that it brings together material in one volume which would otherwise be found only by running through several dozen others.

The point of view maintained in *Critics and Crusaders* is unequivocally radical, the implication being that the evils of slavery and industrialization were so gross that only violent dissent did justice to them. Social dreamers like Albert Brisbane are recognized to be such, and the more desperate acts and opinions of the anarchists are deprecated, but it is made clear that they were to be expected from the sordid environment provided by the reactionaries. So far, so good. But Mr. Madison's book is to be, remember, a substitute for several dozen others. It is therefore legitimate to ask how well it carries out its mission, what kind of information it offers its reader. Of what use is this "usable" history of Mr. Madison's?

As a specimen, let us consider his essay on William Lloyd Garrison. He is presented as a crusader who has been unjustly forgotten, a veritable "lost man" of American history; and forgotten, first, because he was so utterly successful in his crusade against slavery that there was no need for remembering him, and, second, because the materialistic post-Civil War generation was no longer interested in reform. Would one guess from this version that Garrison was apotheosized in his old age; that there have been numerous memoirs of him, cast in the shade, certainly, by the massive four-volume family memoir; and that post-Civil War reformers like Edward Bellamy (of whom Mr. Madison also writes) felt that they were carrying on a crusade comparable to that which Garrison had assumed before them?

And how, from this version, would one ever learn that formidable students have seriously challenged the Garrison legend? Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond in particular organized facts and figures designed to prove that Garrison, far from being a moral force of the first magnitude, or any magnitude, was a positive hindrance to the antislavery crusade, not to be mentioned in the same breath with men who welded

the North together in principle or led it to victory at the polls and on the battlefield. Theodore D. Weld is the hero of Barnes's *The Anti-slavery Impulse (1830-1844)*. James G. Birney has received the special attention of Dumond. In addition, they raised from the past such figures in abolition as Henry B. Stanton, the Tappan brothers, Joshua Leavitt, all of whom were opposed to Garrison and his ways, and may have—I say, *may* have—in less "radical" ways, done more to further antislavery sentiment than he did.

Who is right, Barnes and Dumond, or Mr. Madison? The point is not that he has differed with these scholars, but that he has not thought it necessary to read their works, or James C. Malin's story with reference to his essay on John Brown, or anything at all by Allan Nevins with reference to any of his essays. Yet his bibliography finds space for such relative nonentities as Lorenzo Sears, McAlister Coleman, Allan Seager, and Floyd Dell. Mr. Madison could readily have learned of works which challenged many of his statements and opinions, and must have run across a variety of them. Indeed, he includes in his bibliography William Birney's *James G. Birney and His Times,* but nowhere indicates that it is a violent attack on Garrison.

The evidence is plain that he has been "using" the American past for his own purposes. The result is that there are not only numerous little errors and half-errors, which perhaps only the scholar would care about, but that the larger interpretations are open to sharp criticism. In addition, there are gross contradictions. We have seen Garrison pictured as steering the destinies of the North toward antislavery, though no evidence is presented that he did. But then, in the essay on Thoreau, we learn that "while other Abolitionists merely ranted [John] Brown had the great courage to precipitate action" (p. 193). Now, did Garrison merely rant, or was he a statesman? The truth is that Mr. Madison does not know. Nor does he know how to evaluate John Brown's desperate deed, or Emma Goldman's work, or Randolph Bourne's repudiation of the political state, or John Reed's vicissitudes. He has chosen not to investigate the background, to compare points of view boldly and in the full light of day. He has been a sentimentalist, enamored of the beautiful word, indifferent to the substantial deed, and he, too, must be judged by the hard touchstone of performance as indicated by Lowell in the passage earlier quoted.

Curiously enough, Mr. Madison's two most original essays, dealing with the anarchist Benjamin R. Tucker and the socialist theoretician Daniel De Leon are no stronger than those written essentially on the basis of one or two standard works. Here is evidence, then, that it is not for lack of original research that his book fails, but for lack of a proper respect toward things as they are. He has demanded that history be "usable," do what he wants it to do, or get out of his way. Mr. Madison's is a large book and it takes a position which, in part, many readers of *The Antioch Review* would probably find sympathetic. What attitude ought they to take toward the method he has employed in writing it?

III

All this is by no means to suggest that one need modify his principles in any way in order to appease unsympathetic historians; one should, however, feel strong enough to repulse them and their arguments on fair ground. The point is simply that through carelessness and indifference we have lost the use of large segments of American history, and have been unable truly to use it in our thinking. But this has not been an accidental development, and it will not accidentally be overcome. Our relation to history is determined, at least in part, by the goals toward which we reach. I wonder, for example, whether a person who has his heart set on a Soviet America could take any satisfaction in the muckrakers, who were individualists to the last man and had other "bourgeois" frailties observable in other Americans. To be sure, the astute collectivist might study America's heroes in order to drive realistically toward his goal, to understand his enemies in order to conquer them. But the Communists were never interested in such a study, which, in essence, involves a sincere concern for the living tissue of the American body politic, past and present. Hence, they remained essentially aliens in their own land. So did the flapper philosophers, the debunkers, and, one need hardly say, the expatriates. The "Bible belt" statesmen, the ward heelers, the goose-stepping educators lacked the brilliance, courage, and sensitivity which, in varying degrees, the iconoclasts could sometimes boast; but they were vastly more real, at least to their neighbors. They knew their past, meanly but adequately. They could claim Lincoln, in the North. They could frighten their constituents with memories of carpetbag rule, in the South.

They could afford to laugh at the sentimentalists, could better claim that, for them, the past was "usable."

Thus, the problem of the "usable" past is not one of how to accumulate sufficient information to answer a $64 question, nor yet of developing an academic interest in trivia. It is one of determining where we have been and where we intend to go. We know now that the past is not lightly to be fingered, but such is the force of habit that we cannot yet take it with proper seriousness.

The integrity which valid history demands is not, after all, different from the general integrity which must be achieved if we are not all to fall into a pit of our own devising. Even those who hold with the most passionate conviction to liberal and quasi-liberal programs know that forces they cannot entirely control might wipe them out as readily as the most thorough blackguard. The times need more than righteous people. They must practice as well as preach humility, and that firmness in the right which eminent and yet moderate men have somehow achieved. They must be of the people, and yet ahead of them. And they must be as much a part of the past as they are of the future.

JOHN STEINBECK, CALIFORNIAN

By FREEMAN CHAMPNEY

JOHN STEINBECK is one of the few American writers who can be discussed in both past and present. He has done important work for fifteen years or so and he is still developing and experimenting. So much criticism and analysis of his work have been published that writing any more seems a little silly—we have several times as many passable literary critics now as we have halfway good creators. But most of the critics are Easterners and have discussed Steinbeck's books with little or no knowledge of the country in which he grew up and which he writes about. Even a casual direct contact with this country and its people suggests that this background is the most important thing to know about Steinbeck and that it explains much of his writing better than any amount of remote analysis. It also explains things about the East by comparison and contrast.

* * *

The Salinas Valley roughly parallels the coast, thirty miles or so inland, for most of its length of about a hundred and twenty miles. It is one of the smaller of California's central valleys, which run up and down the state between mountain ranges. The enclosing hills have the steep slopes and the barren, rounded crests which have evoked so many anatomical comparisons. During much of the year they are brown and dry, turning green during the rainy winter. The river, the highway, and the Southern Pacific Railroad chase each other down the valley floor. The river itself, like most California rivers, is normally sandy, brush-choked, and nearly dry but carries a great volume of floodwater when the big rains come. At the lower end of the valley the flat bottomland is cut into great fields of lettuce, broccoli, alfalfa, sugar beets, and other truck crops. Cattle are raised on the slopes of the hills. Salinas (where Steinbeck was born and raised) is about ten miles inland from the river's mouth in Monterey Bay. It is the county seat and the trading and shipping center for the lower part of the valley. It looks a little more metropolitan than the raw valley towns but not much more.

Cattle-raising has been a valley occupation since the days of the missions but the intensive cultivation of vegetables—especially lettuce, which takes up more than 50,000 acres—has outranked it in importance for some time. But the nostalgic glamor of the cowhand days is clung to. You see fifty lean men in sombreros, tight jeans, and riding boots for every visible horse. Once a year Salinas stages "California's Biggest Rodeo" and cashes in handsomely on its nostalgia.

Lettuce, however, is the big industry of the valley, and its growing, packing, and shipping follow the highly capitalized pattern of California agriculture that Carey McWilliams has accurately called "Factories in the Field." In 1936 a strike by lettuce packing shed workers was crushed at a cost of around a quarter of a million dollars. Civil liberties, local government, and normal judicial processes were all suspended during the strike and Salinas was governed by a general staff directed by the Associated Farmers and the big lettuce growers and shippers. The local police were bossed by a reserve army officer imported for the job and at the height of the strike all male residents of Salinas between 18 and 45 were mobilized under penalty of arrest, were deputized and armed. Beatings, tear gas attacks, wholesale arrests, threats to lynch San Francisco newspapermen if they didn't leave town, and machine guns and barbed wire all figured in the month-long struggle which finally broke the strike and destroyed the union.

So much for John Steinbeck's birthplace, where he lived his first nineteen years. From Salinas it is about fifteen miles through a pass in the Santa Lucia Range to the Monterey Peninsula. This fantastic area contains some of the most picturesque country in the world and an assortment of humanity almost as bizarre and much less permanent. Monterey itself is tough and raucous. Its harbor shelters the purse-seiners of the sardine fleet; farther west the shore is solid with the processing plants (Cannery Row) that receive the catch. The fishermen and cannery workers are Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, a few Chinese, and the paisanos of *Tortilla Flat.* Nearby is the army post of Fort Ord and the main business section along Alvarado Street is thick with ratty-looking bars. Sardine fishing and the canneries are highly speculative, feast-or-famine affairs. Beyond this variable economic base, Monterey has its honkeytonks for the military and a considerable volume of tourist business (they come to see

the fishing boats and the historic adobes and absorb the legends of the rancho and mission days).

Just west of Cannery Row is the city of Pacific Grove. Its recent history stems from the days when it was a Methodist camp-meeting ground, complete with a fence, and duly locked against the sinful world at curfew. Today it has become rather nondescript middle-class—a haven for retired Middlewesterners of the staider sorts and a respectable residential town. Its moralistic past lingers on in covenants in real estate deeds forever prohibiting the sale of liquor, and in books in the public library from which the profanity has been scratched with a righteous nail file (apparently; maybe it was a hat pin or a corset stay). Public night life in Pacific Grove is limited to a few dreary milkshake dens and occasional prowling teenagers trying to make noises like juvenile delinquents.

Across the wooded ridge of the Peninsula is Carmel-by-the-Sea. Originally an artists-and-writers colony, Carmel has become a fashionable center for all sorts of people with cultural pretensions and a surplus of money. It is quaint and arty and individualistic and grimly "unspoiled." Down the coast from Carmel is the craggy and desolate Big Sur country (once Robinson Jeffers' special literary domain). Most of the shore line between Pacific Grove and Carmel, and most of the wooded hills behind it, are part of the Del Monte Properties—an exclusive real estate development purveying summer homes and de luxe lodge accommodations to the financial aristocracy of California.

The Monterey Peninsula has a lively bohemian-artist-writer class. The ones with money live in Carmel. The others in the hills above Monterey, in the Big Sur country, or anywhere else where rents are low and the folkways relaxed. The mild climate makes a minimum of clothes and housing quite tolerable. The shifting population, the resort atmosphere, and the lack of strenuous industry all give a certain glamor and acceptability to the bohemian life. It even has a certain economic importance as part of the tourist bait.

One other environmental feature should be mentioned: the Bay swarms with marine life. Even a casual observer of the tide pools gets some of the feeling for biological diversity, fecundity, and struggle which has played so important a part in Steinbeck's thinking.

II

John Steinbeck grew up in Salinas and after four years at Stanford University he lived at various times in Carmel and Pacific Grove and kept a fishing boat in Monterey Harbor. More perhaps than any important contemporary American writer, except William Faulkner, his writing has grown out of a special region. It is a region, however, that contains such polar extremes as the hard materialism of Salinas and the bohemianism of the Peninsula. Both have obviously been important in Steinbeck's writing but Salinas came first and is most apparent.

The cultural climate of the Salinas Valley is typical of California agriculture. A tradition of personal individualism goes along with a strongly collectivized economy. As Carey McWilliams has pointed out, the great California valleys show few resemblances to traditional American rural life. The "school-house on the hilltop, the comfortable homes, the compact and easy indolence of the countryside" are noticeably absent. Instead there are the vast orchards, vineyards, and ranches, meticulously tended, irrigated, and smudged but showing little close functional connection with human life. They are (most of them) really farm factories, and their financing and cultivation, and the marketing of their output, have become highly collectivized activities, managed by and for the great owners and packers, the banks, and the utilities. As in most big business, ownership and management are usually sharply separated. The exploitation of labor has exceeded anything known in Western civilization since the early mill towns of England. The operators of this paradise have usually been able to use or usurp the sovereign powers of local or state government whenever necessary to wipe out a threat to their absolutism.

Economically, socially, and culturally it has been an ugly state of affairs. In its extremes of wealth and destitution, in the absence or impotence of any middle group representing the public interest, and in the domination of the organs of civil life by irresponsible private greed, it has been one of the few areas of American life that has closely approximated the Marxian predictions about capitalist society. The proletariat was kept homeless, voteless, and close to or below the starvation point, with the gulf between it and the dominant group widened by racial differences. Civil liberties were nonexistent whenever they remotely threatened the *status quo*. The whole system was impersonal and relentless and

individual men of good will on either side were helpless to do much about it. There was no liberal, middle-of-the-road answer that had much reality to it. It is not surprising that Steinbeck's reaction to this aspect of his environment was to explore communist answers in *In Dubious Battle.*

The book is the story of two communists and the strike they organized and directed in the apple country. It is a very "dubious battle" indeed. They don't expect to win the strike—in fact they prefer it that way. Their job is to give the strikers an experience of working together and a feeling of their united strength, and to convince them of the implacable nature of their enemy by a bath of blood that will turn as many of them as possible into all-out revolutionaries. All available tricks and deceits are thrown into the game and friends and sympathizers are sacrificed ruthlessly. (The forces of "law and order," to be sure, play their hand as dirtily as they can and leave little to be done in the way of creating grievances and incidents.) One of the communists is killed as the strike begins to disintegrate and the book ends with his faceless corpse propped up on the platform to help his comrade stir up the men to a final burst of violence. It is a study of tactics that make sense only for the long-term end of bloody revolution.

Characteristically, however, Steinbeck's interest in the communists has always been more a matter of what makes them tick as people than of abstract ideology. Why should they go out to face certain beating and possible death from the enemy and betrayal and hatred from the people they are trying to organize? It is this question of motivation that runs through *In Dubious Battle,* is singled out in the story, "The Raid" in *The Long Valley,* and echoes in Casey in *The Grapes of Wrath.* As near as Steinbeck comes to an answer is Casey's quoting of the "fella in the jail house":

> You didn't do it for fun no way. Doin' it 'cause you have to. 'Cause it's you. . . . Anyways you do what you can . . . the on'y thing you got to look at is that ever' time they's a little step fo'ward, she may slip back a little, but she never slips clear back. You can prove that, an' that makes the whole thing right. An' that means they wasn't no waste even if it seemed like they was.

But there is also the note of doubt, of conflict between faith and skepticism. The doctor of *In Dubious Battle,* who will give everything he's got to help the strikers but who has no real faith in the cause, is one side of the conflict in Steinbeck himself. Interestingly enough, Steinbeck never

seems to question the adequacy of the Marxian analysis—he accepts class war and inevitable revolution as the way things are and will be. His doubts go deeper, really; they are doubts as to the nature of mankind itself. The first party for "Doc" in *Cannery Row* is a symbolic dramatization of a feeling that runs all through Steinbeck's writing. Mack and the boys give a surprise party for Doc to show him how much they like him. But Doc doesn't get home when they think he will and the party "she got out of hand." Doc finally gets back to his devastated laboratory and Mack tells him:

> It don't do no good to say I'm sorry. I been sorry all my life. This ain't no new thing. It's always like this. . . . I had a wife. Same thing. Ever' thing I done turned sour. . . . If I done a good thing it got poisoned up some way. If I give her a present they was something wrong with it. She only got hurt from me.

There are many variations of this "every man kills the thing he loves" theme in Steinbeck. *Of Mice and Men* is little else. The doctor of *In Dubious Battle* says:

> There aren't any beginnings. Nor any ends. It seems to me that man has engaged in a blind and fearful struggle out of a past he can't remember, into a future he can't foresee nor understand. And man has met and defeated every obstacle, every enemy except one. He cannot win over himself. How mankind hates itself. . . . We fight ourselves and we can only win by killing every man.

I would suggest that both Steinbeck's acceptance of Marxian dogma as accurate prophecy and his distrust of humanity are outcomes of his California background, and that a broader perspective on American life offers evidence of another sort.

The historical analysis of Marxism calls for a steady intensification of class warfare, in which the lines are drawn more and more sharply, compromise and gradualism become less and less possible, until the stand-up-and-slug-it-out day of revolution comes. After which all things will be different. A lot of our most able writers have accepted this prognosis for America at one time or another. Often, perhaps, they have done so because its drive-to-a-showdown jibes so neatly with their own personality unbalance. The mixture of social revolt, idealism, spiritual homelessness, and unresolved tension that has been so characteristic of serious American writing since the first World War demands an explosive crisis to bring itself to a tolerable, if only temporary, equilibrium. But it has been an out-

standing quality of American evolution since the Civil War that the march of events has by-passed every crisis and that the great showdown never comes. Time and again things have built up to the boiling point, only to subside as new developments broke up rigidities and diverted energies. The revolutionary effects of mass production and technology, and the tremendous reshuffling caused by two world wars seem to have been the factors most responsible.

This by-passing of crises has not been so characteristic of California history as of the country as a whole but I think it can be shown that it has happened there as well—and in one of the worst crisis-spots. When *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Factories in the Field* appeared it looked as if nothing could avert an all-out battle between revolution and fascism in California's great valleys. Conditions were intolerable, tensions were incandescent, and both sides seemed ready and eager to fight it out. But the war raised food prices, created a labor shortage, and brought badly-needed industrial ballast to the California economy. The situation may, of course, come to a new boiling point in the future. But the larger picture has changed and goes on changing and there is no showdown.

This blind dynamic of American growth—this refusal to harden into a static shape—is one of the great and hopeful things about this country. It doesn't make things easier for the writers, however, and may be one reason for the short creative life-expectancy of the best of them.

III

American civilization, with its extraordinary melting pot and its many regional variations, is a risky thing to generalize about. But there is certainly a central core of character, custom, and belief that has been the dominant national strain. Americans, by and large, tend to be optimistic, pragmatic, outgoing, gregarious, energetic, and moral. We believe in the home, in education and self-betterment, in religion and moral responsibility; we take eagerly to the new in technics and distrust the new in social and political institutions; we rate character above intelligence and horse sense above theory. Wherever we have lived for several generations without too much upheaval, these characteristics have become part of a way of life, or a social tradition, or whatever you care to call it, which has a life and strength of its own and shapes the individuals who grow up in it. In spite of variations and breakdowns, this condition of settled

society has, for better or worse, made us what we are. It is what we have to start with and to go on from.

American society, in this sense, is probably strongest in the Middle West. It is noticeably weaker in the Far West and especially weak in Steinbeck's country. There are obvious reasons for this: it is only a hundred years since California was largely unmapped, undeveloped, and very thinly inhabited. It is still subject to upheaval by a great wave of immigrants every twenty years or so and a steady inflow between waves. In the years when it was absorbing the first great comings of Americans, the rigors of the journey, the isolation of the section from the country back East, and the strangeness of the life and the countryside all tended to dilute and efface the habits and culture that the immigrants brought with them. For the most part, the existence of a settled and mature society is exceptional and the typical state of affairs is a condition of formless flux or of unbalanced extremes.

Furthermore, this condition isn't merely a matter of a time lag. The settled American society that we talk about is itself in process of change —so abrupt a series of changes that we can almost say that it is breaking up around our ears. It has lost much of its relevance to the conditions of modern life and it is by no means certain that it will be adaptable enough to make a transition of any smoothness to meet new needs. Since the Far West experienced this pattern of social integration only partially when it was in its prime in the East, now that it is falling apart we can hardly expect to see much more growth of it. Most of the country's intellectuals —which includes the writers—have been cheering on this social breakup for the last twenty-five years. They have carried on a running battle against the restrictions and compulsions of settled society, usually in the name of individual freedom. One of the major differences between the East and the West is that in the East this anti-society drive has about run its course, while in the West it seems to be just getting under way.

The intellectuals of the East have learned that freedom is more complicated than getting away from family and neighbors, or from "the system." The "freedom from" battle has become a rout and such questions as "freedom for what?" and "How do we escape this freedom that we cannot handle?" are the order of the day. It is being discovered—the hard

way—that a settled society offers securities and supports without which few individuals can remain integrated.

The Far West, however, is kicking up its heels in an individualistic binge very much like the bohemianism of Greenwich Village of the '20's. The little magazines are feeling their cultural oats in what would look like a real renaissance if we hadn't seen the same thing and its aftermath in the East. In Steinbeck's home country, there are more than a few devotees of what a recent *Harper's* article calls "The New Cult of Sex and Anarchism."

Steinbeck has always had a keen awareness of the importance of the social cement of common purpose as far as small groups are concerned. That he has never extended it to society as a whole is probably because there has been little visible reason in California life for considering such a projection anything but fanciful. And the Marxist slant on things, of course, has its poetic summation in Dos Passos' "All right we are two nations." As Mac puts it in *In Dubious Battle:*

> Men always like to work together. There's a hunger in men to work together. Do you know that ten men can lift nearly twelve times as big a load as one can? It only takes a little spark to get them going. Most of the time they're suspicious, because every time someone gets 'em working in a group the profit of their work is taken away from them; but wait till they get working for themselves.

Lord knows we have come close enough to being two nations often enough (or three, or four, or no nation at all). But always the change and the reshuffling have gone on and when the chips were down we have been one nation. On the other hand, most parts of California have never been places to get any such feeling and if we don't find it in Steinbeck there's no reason we should expect to. Steinbeck's California contains little fragments of the American character, detached from the whole and dragged over the mountains and the desert with the other immigrant baggage and overdeveloped by the golden sun and the ache of homesickness. The big shots and vigilantes of Salinas show one sort of overdeveloped fragmentation; the fierce Christers of Pacific Grove another. Most of the distribution curves between the mountains and the sea are violently skewed.

Which brings us to another one of Steinbeck's favorite black and white oversimplifications; as he puts it in *Sea of Cortez:*

> the so-called and considered good qualities are invariably concomitants of failure, while the bad ones are the cornerstones of success.

The same idea is somewhat better expressed by Doc in *Cannery Row:*

> The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding and feeling are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest are the traits of success.

The duplication shows how fond Steinbeck is of this idea. It may be a reasonable reaction to the Salinas growers and their flunkies, but as an unqualified statement about American life it is absurd. It probably had considerable truth in it in the "Robber Baron" period after the Civil War, when the relatively simple and self-sufficient village economies of agriculture, handcraft and trade were disappearing before the thrust of big business combinations. There were huge rewards then in financial piracy and mercantile buccaneering. But the very process that has changed the typical American career from individual enterprise to wage- or salary-earning for one bureaucracy or another has brought about a lessening of acquisitive pressures. It is still true enough that a man who puts money-getting at the top of his agenda will usually accumulate more of it than a man who doesn't. But unless it is "failure" not to be a millionaire, there are plenty of fields of activity in which the generous virtues are no handicap. In fact, one of the most characteristic "types" in modern life is the go-getter who never quite makes the grade, is always busily outfoxing himself, and affords endless amusement to his more relaxed colleagues.

This key idea of Steinbeck's is, I submit, a California aberration. That it *is* a key idea is pretty obvious. It crops out in the way he hates his middle-class characters. (There are no capitalist giants in Steinbeck's writing—except for occasional beautifully scatological references to Hearst.) His middle-class men are mean, pudgy creatures, blinking pinkly through spectacles, the slaves of their small anxieties and their neurotic and sexually frigid wives. The lunch-wagon woman in *The Grapes of Wrath* dismisses them collectively as "shitheels." (It should be remembered too that California is perpetually full of tourists, and that to the gawked-at native the American Tourist is not a sympathetic type.)

This hatred of the genteel, the solvent, and the fancypants is, of course, the other side of the sentimentalizing of the paisanos of *Tortilla Flat* and the bums of *Cannery Row*. Which is one of the things Steinbeck

is famous for. It doesn't require too complicated an explanation. Everything Steinbeck has written shows the urgency of his need to "bite deeply into living." His environment, however, showed him only a mean, life-denying greed and respectability firmly in the saddle. He tried for a while to find answers and a spiritual home for himself in the dream of social revolution. But the Revolution has its own austerities and narrow righteousness and there was always his deep distrust of humanity's capacity for surpassing itself. But when he had rejected Man as Success and Man as Citizen, and couldn't quite accept Man as Reformer or Revolutionary, what was left? Well, there was Man as Animal, and to be satisfactory he had to be without any other pretensions. Hence Danny and Pilon and Mack and the boys. It is noticeable, however, that even Steinbeck cannot sustain the celebration of Man as Animal for long without slipping into a semi-lyrical sort of fantasy-prose in which the complexities and consequences of real life are lost in the happy fog of a literary mood. It is undeniable that an important section of the traditional American character got itself badly warped by trying to ignore Man as Animal. Writers of our generation have supplied a corrective reaction which was certainly needed but has just as certainly been a little more than adequate.

There is one of Steinbeck's books, however, in which his tensions and conflicts seem to have reached an affirmative equilibrium. The people in *The Grapes of Wrath* are whole (Man as Man, for a change); they live with the natural balance of biological, social, and spiritual needs and assertions that makes the human being. There is no anxiety over leftist means and ends, no agonizing about the self-hate in man. For all its sprawling asides and extravagances, *The Grapes of Wrath* is a big book, a great book, and one of maybe two or three American novels in a class with *Huckleberry Finn*.

I think it is significant that *The Grapes of Wrath* is about folks who have the cement of settled society in them. For all their exile and destitution, they are a *people,* and they act as a people to an extent that is unique in Steinbeck's writing and in the California life which he knows best. I suggest that it is this social integration—which Steinbeck has felt and reproduced amazingly well—which is the greatness of this book. Further, this social integration provides the answers to the dichotomies and oversimplifications which torture so much of Steinbeck's other writ-

ing. Against it as a frame of reference, being a responsible citizen and a jobholder becomes merely playing an honest and dignified part in the common life—rather than the mean abdication of freedom and vitality that is implied by the glorification of Mack and the boys. The tortured obsession about men killing the thing they love shows up as the self-pitying indulgence of a romantic individualism gone sour. The answer to it is in Ma Joad's advice to Uncle John about his sins:

> Tell 'em to God. Don' go burdenin' other people with your sins. That ain't decent. . . . Go down the river an' stick your head under an' whisper 'em in the stream.

The pattern of life that Steinbeck found in the Joads—their strength as a people—has been undergoing the attrition of the city and the machine for several generations. Much of it is gone for good and much that remains is moribund. No amount of nostalgic yearning is going to regenerate it. But the lesson we are painfully learning today is that some sort of settled society—with habits, folkways, common aspirations, sanctions and taboos—is an essential part of human life. The rampant individualism of the frontier days is not only too irresponsibly anarchic for modern economic society but it fails to provide the social fabric that supports individual sanity. A kind of dynamic balance between society and the individual is what we need and the danger of too much individualism is that it can create a reaction to the other extreme. It should go without saying that the social integration we need will have to be relevant to today's conditions of living. But that is a long way from saying (as so much of our literature has said for the last twenty-five years) that all society, or all "capitalist" society, is rotten to the core and must be swept into the ashcan of history before things can be better.

IV

There is a coldness about *The Wayward Bus* that reviewers have variously found unpleasant and a welcome change from previous emotional lushness. The book has few "sympathetic" characters and these are chiefly distinguished by a sort of hard, despairing honesty. One of the best reviews that have appeared[1] points out that the key to Steinbeck's approach in this book is explicitly stated in *Sea of Cortez.*

[1]By Toni Jackson Ricketts in *What's Doing On The Monterey Peninsula,* a small California magazine which began as tourist bait and has matured in a little over a year into a first-rate regional publication. Mrs. Ricketts knows Steinbeck well and her statements about his intent can be accepted as sound.

In a rough way, *Sea of Cortez* occupies about the same place in Steinbeck's work that *Death in the Afternoon* does in Hemingway's. Both are relaxed musings about life and art, written as breathers between novels. There is also something of a parallel in Hemingway tying *Death in the Afternoon* to the lore of the bull ring while Steinbeck uses a cruise to the Gulf of California—to collect tide-pool invertebrates—as his framework. The ritual violence of bull-fighting was Hemingway's peacetime laboratory for the study of death and pure emotion. Marine biology has had a similar fascination for Steinbeck.

The part of *Sea of Cortez* that concerns us here is Steinbeck's speculation about what he calls "nonteleogical thinking." This seems to be a mixture of philosophical relativism, the rigorous refusal of the scientist to be dogmatic about hypotheses, and a sort of moral fatalism. To quote:

> What we personally conceive by the term "teleological thinking" . . . is most frequently associated with the evaluation of causes and effects, the purposiveness of events. This kind of thinking considers changes and cures—what "should be" in the terms of an end pattern (which is often a subjective or an anthropomorphic projection); it presumes the bettering of conditions, often, unfortunately, without achieving more than a most superficial understanding of those conditions. In their sometimes intolerant refusal to face facts as they are, teleological notions may substitute a fierce but ineffectual attempt to change conditions which are assumed to be undesirable, in place of the understanding-acceptance which would pave the way for a more sensible attempt at any change which may still be indicated.
>
> Nonteleological ideas derive through "is" thinking, associated with natural selection as Darwin seems to have understood it. They imply depth, fundamentalism, and clarity—seeing beyond traditional or personal projection. They consider events as outgrowths and expressions rather than as results; conscious acceptance as a desideratum, and certainly as an all-important prerequisite. Nonteleological thinking concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually "is"—attempting at most to answer the already sufficiently difficult questions *what* or *how*, instead of *why*.

This is fairly heavy going but it is clear enough that Steinbeck is objecting to wishfulness obscuring facts, and understanding being limited by preconceived notions of what should be the case. No one can quarrel with this. There is a strong implication, however, that to think in terms of "why" and "what might be" is not only risky but downright sinful. This implication is even stronger in the following:

> It is amazing how the strictures of the old teleologies infect our observation, causal thinking warped by hope. It was said earlier that hope is a diagnostic human trait, and this simple cortex symptom seems to be a prime factor in our inspection of our universe. For hope implies a change from a present bad condition to a future better one. The slave hopes for freedom, the weary man for rest, the hungry for food. And the feeders of hope, economic and religious, have from these simple strivings of dissatisfaction managed to create a world picture which is very hard to escape. Man grows toward perfection; animals grow toward man; bad grows toward good; and down toward up, until our little mechanism, hope, achieved in ourselves probably to cushion the shock of thought, manages to warp our whole world. . . . To most men the most hateful statement possible is, *"A thing is because it is."* Even those who have managed to drop the leading-strings of a Sunday-school deity are still led by the unconscious teleology of their developed trick.

It should be apparent from these quotations why I said that Steinbeck's "is-thinking" has a large content of moral fatalism. If the height of wisdom is "things are because they are" and thinking in terms of cause and effect and of changes for the better are Sunday-school fatuities, we come to an attitude towards life remarkably oriental and passive. It is not the attitude with which we normally contemplate our house catching fire—nor our world catching fire. For that matter, it is not an attitude which would lead anyone to build a house in the first place—or to do any other creative job based on "what might be." Nor will observation which shuns the "why" of things *see* very much in the long run. Its only logical end is pure mysticism—a search for objectivity winding up in the absolute subjective.

This line of thought is not new in Steinbeck's writing. The doctor of *In Dubious Battle* is something of a nonteleological thinker. But previously it had been a sort of intriguing sideline. In *Sea of Cortez* it becomes the main channel and in both *Cannery Row* and *The Wayward Bus* Steinbeck is obviously trying to see what he can do with nonteleological literature. I can only speculate as to why his slant on things took this particular turn at this particular time. But the *Sea of Cortez* cruise took place in the spring and early summer of 1940, when the Nazis were overrunning France and the Low Countries. Steinbeck's attitude to the war then was that it was:

> a war . . . which no one wants to fight, in which no one can see a gain—a zombie war of sleep-walkers which nevertheless goes on out of all control of intelligence.

So he collected his invertebrates and watched the teeming tide-pool struggle of eat-and-be-eaten and wondered whether a school of fish mightn't properly be considered an organism in its own right (like "group-man"), and he thought further about war and men:

> When it seems that men may be kinder to men, that wars may not come again, we completely ignore the nature of our species. If we used the same smug observation on ourselves that we do on hermit crabs we would be forced to say, with the information at hand, "It is one diagnostic trait of *Homo Sapiens* that groups of individuals are periodically infected with a feverish nervousness which causes the individual to turn on and destroy, not only his own kind, but the works of his own kind. It is not known whether this be caused by a virus, some airborne spore, or whether it be a species reaction to some meteorological stimulus as yet undetermined." Hope, which is another species diagnostic trait—the hope that this may not always be—does not in the least change the observable past and present. When two crayfish meet, they usually fight. One would say that perhaps they might not at a future time, but without some mutation it is not likely that they will lose this trait. And perhaps our species is not likely to forgo war without some psychic mutation which at present, at least, does not seem imminent. And if one places the blame for killing and destroying on economic insecurity, on inequality, on injustice, he is simply stating the proposition in another way. We have what we are. . . . So far the murder trait of our species is as regular and observable as our various sexual habits.

It seems likely that the war was, for Steinbeck, overwhelming evidence of the irrational, self-destructive drive of the human race; that it killed—or at least submerged—the faith and buoyancy that filled *The Grapes of Wrath;* and that it drove him back on the toughminded nihilism of "is-thinking." As noted above, the "golden mean" and the "middle way" are no part of Steinbeck's temperament. When he abandons Man as Man for Man as Biological Freak he goes all the way. He jettisons not only hope and progress but cause and effect as well. Which leaves the vertebrates of *The Wayward Bus,* animated by the simpler forms of protoplasmic irritability, and deprived of even a biological dignity by their silly pretensions that they are up to something noble.

Steinbeck's current "is-thinking" has a lot in common with the search for verbal simplicity and for the hard, clean reality of the physically tangible that characterized Hemingway's writing after the previous war. Both are spiritually weary, sick of abstractions and ideologies, and both find comfort in the evocation of what can be seen, felt, heard, smelled.

and tasted. In Steinbeck, this retreat to physical reality takes the form of descriptions of the countryside and its wild life and a meticulous reporting of physical action—especially skilled action. In *The Wayward Bus* some of his reporting is a repetition of what he has done better elsewhere. The repairs to the bus that open the book are of a piece with the burnt-out connecting rod bearing in *The Grapes of Wrath* (including the same superstition about skinned knuckles). The Chicoy lunchroom also has a prototype in the previous book and Mrs. Pritchard had a preview in the story called "The White Quail." But much of the book is fresh and new and if Steinbeck's faith in mankind is at a low ebb, his skill as a writer is becoming keener. There is more precision and control in the prose and the structure than in his other books and it ends with little of the melodrama that has wound up most of his previous novels.

The Wayward Bus is, if less *intensely* regional than some of his other books, the most broadly descriptive of California's countryside and the queer assortments of people encountered there. The accidental grouping of a collection of "characters" in a situation which "brings them out" is more than a novelist's trick. It is itself fairly typical of California life. It symbolizes the endless coming and going, the fragmentary social integration, and the human diversity of the region. In fact, it would be quite plausible to say that Steinbeck's "is-thinking" can be explained without reference to any background of disillusionment in revolution and mankind—that it is simply the way life looks to a thoughtful Californian who has outgrown his youth.

V

In many ways the American West might be a good place in which to see our future cultural pattern shape up. The lack of settled society which we dwelt on above may facilitate new cultural fusions and social forms. Just as America itself diverged widely from its European sources because it encountered the first impact of the industrial revolution with less of a cushioning of habit and institutional inertia than the old country, so the West may adapt to the continuing thrust of change more directly and flexibly than the more static East. There are many rigid extremes in the West, of course, and California in particular has many people who come out only to die, or to postpone dying. But the general configuration is one of flux and change and it is a region to which many come in the

hope of some sort of vaguely splendid fulfillment. There is still something of the selective process which colonized and settled America at work and California is a setting in which an inchoate mass of aspiration and restless hope will have to either find new patterns of living or drown itself in the Pacific.

One important area where the West seems to show a hopeful flexibility is in the relation between the intellectual and the common man. In most of the country the cleavages between these two classes is one of the sharpest and most disastrous gulfs in American life. The intellectual is a specialist in abstract thought. He typically works from the general to the particular (and sometimes never arrives at the particular at all) and is articulate to a point where he is often unable to perceive any reality for which he lacks a word. The nonintellectual, on the other hand, deals with particulars almost exclusively. He ordinarily uses abstractions and generalizations only in an uncritical, proverbial way that he has picked up from someone else. For the most part, he is incapable of abstract thinking—being unable to use words precisely or to perceive the niceties of logic. But the intellectual so overvalues words and logic, and generalizes from such a narrow base of experience that his conclusions are often irrelevant and sometimes absurd. More serious, he is usually cut off by his overspecialized work and personality from any broad, functional give-and-take with society as a whole. Consequently, his shortcomings of understanding tend to be self-reinforcing and he becomes more and more isolated culturally from everyone but other intellectuals. Society, meanwhile, is deprived of effective intellectual leadership from its most talented (in this direction) members and becomes ripe for totalitarian manipulation.

This vicious circle is of special importance to writers because they are, in the nature of things, intellectuals, and their job is to give meaning and relationship to the raw stuff of life. And since most readers, critics, and publishers of serious literature are also intellectuals, and since a successful writer usually moves completely out of his social and cultural origins into the rarefied air of the literary world, the unhappy social and individual effects of intellectual isolationism are all too characteristic of contemporary literature.

All of this has to do with Steinbeck because—almost alone among important contemporaries—he seems to have no hankering for the literary

life or the isolationism of a typical intellectual. The people he writes about are primarily nonintellectuals and his acquaintance with such people and his intuitive feeling for what makes them tick are probably his greatest strength as a writer. He presumably classifies the typical professional intellectual along with the other middle-class "shitheels" as inferior and inadequate human beings. His best field is the subrational and the inarticulate and many of the reviews of *The Wayward Bus* show that this anti-intellectualism produces confusion among the critics who are called upon to classify and evaluate his writing.

The brilliant Mr. Barzun, for instance, discussed the book in a recent issue of *Harper's* with a mixture of disdain and incomprehension. The characters of *The Wayward Bus* meet no vital counterparts in Mr. Barzun's frame of reference—exceptionally qualified though he is in the worlds of learning and abstractions—and he could only blather about Steinbeck's using the naturalist tradition without bothering to understand it. On the other hand, there have been some reviews of the book which overpraised it with the maudlin hysteria of someone's maiden aunt trying to live dangerously.

It is typical of Steinbeck—and it is typical of California—that he can study biology and speculate about teleology without losing his interest in, or fellowship with, Mack and the boys. His biggest contribution as a writer may turn out to have been the exploration and colonization of the no-man's-land between intellectual and nonintellectual, rational and subrational. Similarly, the ferment of California may come to play a similar part in the future of America.

As we have suggested above, Steinbeck's *Sea of Cortez* musings suggest that he has grown weary of trying to make responsible sense of life and is experimenting with "nonteleological" reporting. But even the most arid stretches of *The Wayward Bus* pretty well demonstrate the impossibility of writing in a state of abstract omniscience from which cause and effect and good and bad have been filtered. Even among the dip-net heterogeneity of this novel's catch, he obviously likes some and dislikes others, and he finds it necessary to explain how they got the way they are. Both Steinbeck and California are relatively young. I suggest that both may have their most creative days ahead of them. And that it would be intelligent to study them in relation to each other.

A STORY

NOBODY DIES IN THIS WARD

By SAM ELKIN

THE NURSE switched on the light at seven in the morning. Then she wheeled in a breakfast carriage and began serving bacon and scrambled eggs, hot cereal, toast, butter, jelly, orange juice and coffee. She placed two plates of food and a glass of juice, cup of coffee, spoons, knife, and fork on a hard rubbered tray which she gave to a ward boy who brought it over to the patients.

The nurse was nice. She was soft-looking. She had a nice way of smiling that made you feel you'd like to wake up in the morning and look at a smile like that beside you. She was well-stacked and that made her better to think about.

The ward boy, a corporal, was long and thin. He had a good heart and, because of it, took a merciless ribbing from the patients.

A stocky blonde-haired young man, whose first name was Pete and who slept in the last bed on the right side of the ward, arose from bed, slipped into his slippers, and began walking in his pajamas to a table in the center of the ward.

Reaching the table he chose a record from a stack of records, placed it on the turntable of a phonograph which was supplied by Special Service.

The song was the ward's reveille. It was something about: "Nursie, what can the matter be?" Pete put it on very loud and when the song ended he started it from the beginning again.

One of the patients downward yelled out: "Turn the goddamn thing off!"

But Pete didn't seem to hear.

"Wake up, you sonsabitches!" he said. "Up an' at 'em! Let's go! Hit the deck!"

"Quiet!" somebody said. "Women present!"

Pete smiled. "That ain't no woman," he said. "Are you, Nursie?"

The nurse looked up from a pot of scrambled eggs.

"What's that?" she said.

She had heard the conversation but she knew better than to let on.

Pete shook his head, smiling. Then he began to sing in a rasping voice: "Nurse, oh nurse, oh nurse, I'm getting woise."

The ward boy had finished serving trays on the right side of the ward by this time, and was already carrying food over to the other side. When he came to the fifth bed, in which lay a sallow-faced, dark-haired young man flat on his back with dark eyes staring up at the ceiling, he paused and said hesitantly: "You . . . wanna eat?"

There was no answer, no movement, no outward sign that the young man in the bed had heard.

The ward boy shook his head slowly from side to side and moved on to the next bed.

Pete had watched the incident and now he walked over to the fifth bed. He sat down on the edge of it. The young man under the covers displayed no sign of recognition. There was nothing from him to indicate that anyone had sat down on his bed.

Pete hesitated. Then shook his head quickly from side to side. His manner became soft. His tone urging. "Have something to eat, kid."

No movement.

"Look, kid, you ain't had a thing for three days."

No answer.

"You gotta snap out of it, kid. You ain't gonna . . ." Pete leaned forward, smiling. "Listen, we all feel the same way in the beginning."

Silence.

"You *gotta* eat, kid. If you eat enough you're *bound* to grow a couple of legs, see?" Pete laughed. "Where the hell else can the food go?"

The dark-haired young man in the bed did not waver. His eyes were fixed on the ceiling. Lifelessly. Except for the slight rise and fall of the covers on his chest he appeared to be dead.

Or paralyzed.

Pete stopped laughing. His mouth slid into a smile. Then relaxed altogether. He got up and went back to the table in the center of the ward. He arrived there just in time to shift the needle from the end to the beginning of the record again.

"Awright, you bastards!" he shouted in a singing voice. "Let's all *hop* outta bed now and do—some—*ex*ercise! Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!" He flung

his left arm straight up over his head, then parallel to the floor, then slapped it down against his left leg. He repeated this movement and the stump of his right arm kept time with his left arm.

Somebody said: "Looks like a chicken with a broken wing."

Somebody else laughed.

Pete sang: "I gave my arm to the arm-y—ohhhh boy what a mess! I gave my arm to the armmmmmmy—ohhhhhhhhh boy what a mess!" He grimaced, shaking his head, and looked toward the phonograph. He lifted the needle from the record, set it into its groove, shut the top of the phonograph, then sat down at the table to eat his breakfast.

By this time the entire ward was awake. The ward boy was already taking some trays away from patients who had finished eating. Now, those who were able to walk, made for the ward latrine while urine bottles and bedpans were distributed by the ward boy to those still bedridden.

The young man in the fifth bed had asked for nothing. Received nothing. He still stared up at the ceiling over his head.

One of the patients yelled to the ward boy: "You better get me one of them bottles, soldier."

"Yeah," another patient said. "On the double, T/5. I ain't in no mood for swimming this morning."

"Corporal," the ward boy said.

"Oh. Corporal. Well. Gimme an order, corporal."

"Why?"

"I like to tell corporals what they can do with their orders."

"Who wanted that bottle?"

"Right here, brasshat. This is a pee-vee-tee talking."

The ward boy laughed. "Best damn soldiers in the army—pee-vee-tees."

"And second lieutenants," somebody said, laughing.

This brought general laughter all around the ward and Pete, having finished breakfast, stood up, wiped his lips and sang out: "I gave my arm to the arm-y—ohhhhh boy what a mess!" He turned to the nurse who, by this time, was scooping garbage off plates with a spoon into a pail and placing the dirty dishes in a compartment of the carriage. "Nursie," he said. "Whadidyou give to the army?"

The nurse looked around and smiled, slowly, winking at him.

Pete sighed and shook his head. "What they need in this joint," he said, eyeing the shapely spread of her hips, "is private rooms with private nurses." He nodded, satisfied with this thought. "That's what they need in *all* these joints." He laughed and spoke to no one in particular: "If they had that, the whole damn army'd be in these hospitals. And if other countries had it, too, *their* whole damn armies'd be in hospitals. No goddamn wars, then. Everybody'd be doing like everybody's supposed to be doing." He nodded slowly and thoughtfully, sighing: "That's what makes the world go round."

"What does, Pete?" somebody asked.

"Like they say in French, sonny," Pete said, "a—nice—good—*shtup.*" His eyes played over the back of the nurse's head, ran down her hips, fastened on her buttocks which were outlined under her seersucker skirt, then down to her legs and ankles. He sighed again and shook his head sadly and went back to his bed.

Now it was after eight. Another nurse, followed by another ward boy, came into the ward. The new ward boy, a PFC, small and muscled in appearance, began to sweep the floor and the new nurse who looked like most nurses look (hard, lined face, coldly serious and businesslike) began to fix the beds of those patients who were in the latrine. The good-looking nurse, having finished with the dishes, began to help and in about fifteen minutes all the unoccupied beds looked prim, cold, and unslept.

Now both nurses left the ward and returned in a few moments, each carrying a pan of soapy hot water and towels. The corporal, meanwhile, had taken the breakfast carriage into the small kitchen that was attached to the ward. The two nurses now became very busy helping the bedridden patients to wash. The hard-looking nurse took the right side of the ward, the soft-looking one the left side.

Downward, Pete, lying on his left side in bed, was talking to the patient in the bed across the narrow aisle. "So there she was," he said. "Beautiful? Santa Maria!"

"Whadshe look like?"

"Like Marlene Dietrich in the legs. Like Betty Grable's torso with Lana Turner's bumpers and a face like Rita Hayworth, Hedy Lamar

and Ingrid Bergman all in one." Pete sighed, shaking his head and winking his right eye, his lips smiling. "Honest to God," he continued, "she lays there in bed, looking up at me and she says no legs, no arms, she says, honey, you still got what I want."

"Some dream," the other patient said.

"Brother, you ain't kidding." Pete turned on his back and looked up at the ceiling. "I'm going right back to sleep now."

"If anything happens, let me know."

"You think I dream for nothing?" Pete said.

Over on the other side of the ward, directly across from Pete's bed, a patient with both arms missing was talking in a loud voice, quickly, mimickingly: "So the old bitch says to me—Oh you *poor* boy. You gave *your* arms for your country." His lips curled up in disgust and his voice normal now: "And I says to her," now gruff, "Yeah, lady, and what do I get for 'em?"

Laughter and smiles followed this remark. And upward, another patient speaking in a loud voice: "They're driving me nuts, see? Every-time they see me I get the needles. How'd it happen? How'd it happen? How'd it happen? I'm getting sick and tired. So one day when they give me the business again I says okay here's how it happened. I had this big toenail, I says to them. And I'm filing it down, see? And before I know it I file my leg off right up to the knee." An explosion of laughter and the patient continuing, laughing: "So help me, they never ask me again. Never."

It had gone past nine by this time, and the soft-looking nurse had reached the fifth bed on the left side of the ward.

She set the pan of fresh, hot, soapy water on the table beside the bed. For just a moment she hesitated, then spoke softly and kindly to the young man who still had his eyes opened at the ceiling over his head.

"Arthur," she said. "How about a wash this morning?"

There was no answer.

"Make you feel better," she said.

For the first time the young man moved. His eyes moved from the ceiling and fastened on the nurse's lips. There was a dead, blank expression on his face. When he spoke his voice came out cracked and phlegmy. "Please leave me alone," he said.

The nurse looked down at him. She seemed to be thinking what to say. Finally, she dipped a face towel into the hot water, wrung it and proceeded to bring the towel to his forehead, saying: "Just let me . . ."

He jerked his head to the side away from her and pushed her hand away with his left hand.

At that moment the ward doctor came into the ward. He was greeted by various cries of: "Cheezit, the butcher!" "Hey, Doc, got any old bones laying around?" "Was that my arm we had for supper last night, Doc?"

Pete, still lying in bed and trying to sleep, opened his eyes. He got up quickly and walked over to the fifth bed on the other side of the ward. The doctor, a captain, a short, thin, energetic-looking man with glasses and thinning red hair, went directly to the fifth bed. He was smiling at the remarks, but his smile faded away as he reached the fifth bed, nodded to the nurse, then to Pete and stood on the other side of the bed from the nurse looking down at the young man under the covers.

"How do you feel, Macy?" he asked curtly.

Arthur Macy shut his eyes.

"He hasn't eaten a thing, sir," the nurse said.

"He's still got it bad, Doc," Pete said.

The doctor kept looking down at Arthur Macy. Then he spoke slowly and distinctly: "Macy," he said, and paused. Arthur Macy did not open his eyes. "Macy," the doctor said again, "nobody dies in my ward if I can help it." He let that stand a moment. Then: "I don't care how much they want to die nobody dies in my ward." He looked up at the nurse. "Glucose," he said. "That'll hold him for a while."

"Yes, sir."

The nurse left. The doctor turned and went back to the first bed in the ward. Pete stood at the foot of the bed looking down at Arthur Macy who had not opened his eyes. Pete had a thoughtful expression on his face. Slowly, his head moved from side to side. Then he turned and went back to his bed.

About an hour after lunch the long, thin corporal and a surgical attendant wheeled in a rolling stretcher, upon which lay a red-faced patient still under anesthesia.

The ward had been quiet. Most of the patients were settled with their heads on their pillows, dozing. But the rolling stretcher awakened them.

And now they opened their eyes and those who could, stretched up to get a look. The corporal and the attendant pushed the stretcher over to the center of the ward where there was an empty bed on Pete's side, and proceeded to transfer the patient from the stretcher to the bed.

Pete was up and already standing beside the bed, asking questions in a low tone.

"Who is he?" he asked of the corporal.

"Name's Ted Latsko. Just got in from France. Rush job."

"What's wrong?"

"Two legs. Right up to the hips."

"Jesus," Pete said. He turned and looked at Arthur Macy across the ward who was now receiving glucose through his left arm from an inverted bottle which was settled on an iron stand beside the bed. A needle had been injected into his arm and the liquid food flowed steadily from the bottle into the pipes, into the needle, and into his arm.

Pete went over to Macy's bed. He felt a little excited. He saw that Macy had his eyes shut, but he knew Macy wasn't sleeping. Macy's closed eyelids flickered.

Pete leaned over the bed close to Macy's ear.

"Both legs, Art," Pete whispered. "Worse'n you. See, there's other guys, too."

Pete knew Macy wouldn't do or say anything. He knew Macy wouldn't open his eyes. But he had just wanted him to know. That's all. He straightened up and went back to the new patient, who was settled now, still under the anesthesia.

The corporal and the surgical attendant started to wheel away the rolling stretcher and the hard-faced nurse came over to the bed to see that the patient was sleeping comfortably.

The covers on the new patient's bed had been loosened so as not to press down heavily on the operated legs. The outline of the legs that weren't there could be plainly seen.

Now a quiet, yet excited, buzz spread around the ward as everyone wanted to know who the new patient was and what was wrong with him. Pete went around telling a few and in no time everyone knew.

Older patients shook their heads sadly and whispered to each other, asking how it had happened, how he would take it. One patient, when Pete told him, said: "Guess he knows."

"Sure, he knows," Pete said.

"Maybe he don't."

"He knows, all right. Didn't they tell you?"

"No."

Pete did not answer.

Another patient said to him: "Wonder how he'll take it?"

"He'll take it all right," Pete said. But he wasn't looking at the patient who had spoken to him. He was looking at Arthur Macy's bed and he saw that Macy had his eyes opened and was staring across the ward at the new patient's bed.

Now something seemed to enter the ward. Something charged and tense and it seemed to become part of every patient, every word, every glance at the new sleeping patient. It seemed to grow and spread and Pete, now, found it difficult to sit still, or lie down in bed. He was up on his feet, going out to the latrine, or in the kitchen, or in the nurse's office, talking to her, asking her if she thought the new patient would come out of it soon. Once he went over to the phonograph and started to open it, but someone whispered across the ward: "Let him sleep, Pete." And Pete nodded and closed the top and went back to his bed and lay down.

But in a few moments he was up again, walking around, talking with others, and, from time to time, glancing towards Arthur Macy, watching him silently.

At one time the nurse came over to the new patient's bed. She looked at him a moment, felt his pulse, and Pete asked her how he was doing.

"Fine," she said. "He may be coming out soon."

The patient did not sleep too soundly. Every now and then he groaned and turned his head and when this happened, everybody turned their eyes to him, watching, quietly, tensely. Once he groaned very loudly, as though trying to say something, and began to move his arms up in an attempt to throw the covers off. Pete rushed over and smoothed the covers down, until the new man, his voice trailing away into his throat, grew quiet and peaceful.

Another time the patient grunted, as though something had fallen on his stomach. Everyone grew quiet and Pete turned to Arthur Macy and saw him move his head off the pillow, his eyes on the new patient.

Everything seemed to have tightened up in the ward. No one was sleeping. Everyone was either talking in low tones, or watching.

Arthur Macy watched. Pete watched both the new patient and Arthur Macy. Every now and then he sat down on someone's bed and spoke to them. And then got up again, and went over to the new patient's bed and looked down at him.

Everything and everybody had tightened up in the ward.

Just after four thirty Ted Latsko groaned and opened his eyes. For a moment he wanted to stretch his arms because he thought he was waking up in his bed at home. And then in a rush he remembered.

When his eyes cleared he saw a stocky, blond-haired guy standing at the foot of his bed. Instantly, he saw the stump of right arm.

Now Ted Latsko knew.

And now Ted Latsko began to feel. A funny kind of pain around his hips. No. Lower than that.

Ted Latsko blinked his eyes. He didn't have any legs. They had told him about it before. He moved his mouth around to get some saliva on his tongue and inside his cheeks. Maybe they didn't do it. Maybe they changed their minds. Maybe he'd better take a look.

What the hell was that guy staring at him for?

The anesthesia cleared quickly and he moved his head around and saw others staring at him. He blinked his eyes and wondered what the hell kind of characters these guys were.

He drew in a breathful of air and blew it out of his mouth. Then he raised his head, pulled his arms out from under the covers and lifted one side of the blanket.

He looked and his eyes blinked.

He snapped the cover back over his body. He lifted the other side of the cover.

He looked and his eyes blinked again.

He snapped the cover back over his body and leaned his head back on the pillow. He looked to his right. To his left, and saw that everyone in the ward was looking at him.

It was terribly quiet in the ward. Pete stood at the foot of the bed, looking down at Ted Latsko. Across the ward, Arthur Macy was watching, silently.

Every patient in the ward had his eyes on the new patient.

Ted Latsko smiled, slowly. He spoke evenly. Tonelessly: "Cut my legs off and call me Shorty," he said.

"Hey, Shorty!" Pete yelled. His face had become suddenly glowing and wide.

Quick laughter broke through the ward like a current of electricity.

Somebody yelled: "Make him chairman."

"Chairman of the stumpers club," another voice said.

"Incorporated," someone added.

Ted Latsko was still smiling. "Me?" he said.

"Yup," Pete said. "You're the kid. My name's Pete."

"Ted," Ted Latsko said.

They shook hands.

Now, questions and laughter were directed at Ted Latsko and the hard-faced nurse came over to the new patient.

She was smiling. And there was a softness to her face and eyes that had not been there before.

Ted Latsko was saying to the nurse: "Guess I'll save a lot on shoe leather from now on." And the nurse laughed. But Pete wasn't listening. His eyes were on Arthur Macy. And now he felt a great excitement.

He hurried over to Arthur Macy's bed. He sat down on the edge of it. Macy's eyes were looking at him. Pete saw that his lips were faintly curled. Now they began to tremble, slightly at first, then more noticeably. Now the eyes were filling up, sparkling.

Pete reached out with his left hand, and pushed the hair back from Macy's brow, gently, kindly. He leaned over and his voice was soft, low, almost pleading.

"Go wan, kid. Go wan," he said. "We all do it at night." His head was nodding up and down. "Make you feel better," he said. "Go wan, kid. Let it go. Let it go."

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM AND WORLD TENSIONS

By OLIVER L. REISER

"THERE NEVER WAS A TIME when so many people were so uncertain about so many things." These are the words uttered by a speaker a quarter of a century ago as he summarized the situation following World War I. Tragically enough, these same words are as applicable today as they were then. Indeed, the uncertainties seem to have increased in number and in significance. In a sense, the whole world is like a modern Descartes, for it is surely clear that though we doubt all else, we have no doubt that we doubt!

One might at least have cherished the hope that in the field of the social sciences enough substantial progress could have been made in the last two decades to reduce somewhat the area of doubt and uncertainty. But apparently just the opposite has taken place. Consider the following pronouncements.

Speaking before the AAAS at the annual meeting of the association in 1939, twenty years after the close of World War I, Dr. Wesley C. Mitchell made the following statement: "The outside limits of what scientists can accomplish as citizens are set by their ignorance. Not only does no individual have more than a tiny fraction of the knowledge that is needed; all the scientists of the country put together do not know enough to solve many of the problems that a democracy faces."

Since the time that Dr. Mitchell declared himself in this manner great changes have come over the world. But these changes apparently have not greatly improved the outlook for human society, if one is to believe the statements of Dr. A. J. Carlson, another distinguished scientist, also speaking before the AAAS. Even after a second world war had been fought and won and a military victory celebrated, Dr. Carlson could observe that we see a helplessness in every direction that has us puzzled, much as if we were a doctor who gazes baffled at a person very sick with a disease he does not understand.

One interesting thing in this survey is the manner in which the present feeling of helplessness among scientists contrasts with the marked optimism of the scientists of a generation back. If one compares the views of Doctors Mitchell and Carlson with the tone of Karl Pearson's views as they are recorded in the introductory chapter of his volume on *The Grammar of Science,* the striking change in spirit from one of confident optimism to the more recent pessimism of such scientists as Professor Harold Urey ("I am still a frightened man") is readily observable. When scientists, in spite of the natural optimism born of their power of control of nature's forces, recognize that they don't know enough to solve the problems of society we are indeed in a unique situation.

II

As one surveys the world scene today, a number of tensions and conflicts attract our attention. Here are some of the major sources of tension in our modern world:

I. An economic, political, and possibly also a military conflict between communist Russia and the capitalistic democracies.

II. A religious conflict between communistic atheism and Roman Catholicism.

III. A religious conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism.

IV. An internal conflict between "capital" and "labor" within finance-capitalistic societies.

V. A conflict between rationalistic science and authoritarian religions.

VI. A conflict between East and West, for example:

a) Racial: a "yellow menace" versus a "white supremacy."

b) Religious: a three-cornered contest between Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity. This could be complicated by a militant Zionism.

One interesting thing that emerges from a study of this list of conflicts, actual or possible, is the fact that these tensions strike across boundaries of nations, races, religions, cultures, classes, and other man-made or established boundaries. Only in so far as geographical areas and topological barriers are involved can it be said that these conflicts are dependent upon anything basic in the nature of things.

A second interesting feature revealed by the study of these conflict-patterns is that the only final resolution of the tensions that are created is to rise above all of them to a higher viewpoint. From such a vantage

point these conflicts lose their significance and tend to disappear because the rival factions no longer have "cause" for opposition. A technique for accomplishing this has been made possible by Boole's logic which shows the possibility of stepping up to the next higher plane, from which the two conflicts can be seen as a whole.

The argument we sometimes hear, that we should continue to maintain these viewpoints and support the distinctions, which may possibly give rise to conflicts, because this adds variety to life, makes the world more interesting, and *provides the possibility for tolerance* of one nation, race, class, or religion by other such groups assumes that there is no way of establishing the truth of rival claims. It may well be that ethnic democracy and a cultural autonomy based on regionalism is good so long as it promotes richness and harmony, based on the possibility of integration, so that a planetary orchestration of cultures is fostered. But to argue that Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus, and Communists should "tolerate" each other could easily be the product of careless thinking. As Pearl Buck recently pointed out, we will make progress only when the Jews quit thinking of themselves as Jews; Christians as Christians; Americans as Americans; white people as whites; Negroes as Negroes; and so on and on. These are all forms of localisms, ethnological provincialisms—infantile identifications of our elementalistic society, as the semanticists would say. The assumption that there is no body of knowledge which transcends, *and therefore either includes or invalidates these various particularisms,* is false. Religious creeds, racist doctrines, nationalistic dogmas —these can be judged by the touchstone of a higher knowledge.

Religion is peculiarly susceptible to the smugness of "toleration." But in our more detached moments most of us realize that while religions "tolerate" each other, they are each and every one of them convinced that they have the "truth" and when the final day of reckoning comes only the elect will be saved. In this sense Christianity is anti-Semitic, anti-Mohammedan, and so on; and Judaism is anti-Christian, anti-Mohammedan, and so on; Marxism is anti-everything, except anti-communistic; and so on and on.

Of course any religion, philosophy, or social institution, which invites "outsiders" to come in on its own terms, which invites you to become one of the select "in-groups" by accepting its own doctrines and attitudes, assumes two things: (1) *that there is one truth which should be accepted*

as the same for all men, and (2) *that this privileged institution, philosophy, or religion, has that truth incorporated in its own teachings and pronouncements.*

I believe it may be said that "scientific humanism" can accept proposition (1), even though we do not yet have that body of truth; but it is equally clear that a "scientific humanism" cannot accept proposition (2), even when that philosophy is the teachings of any current form of "scientific humanism." But it is on the hope of progressively approaching such a body of doctrines that scientific humanism proposes to build. To develop this thought, let us turn to the past for some suggestions.

III

There is an adage that comparisons are odious. But every scientist knows that progress in thinking comes through comparisons, from analogies. It is true, however, that the other maxim, history repeats itself, is also only a half-truth, for novelty is as real as repetition. Applying these observations to the instance of the problem of our confused world, it appears that we may learn from our knowledge of history that in some ways the situation we face today is analogous to that which faced Socrates and Plato in those ancient days of the golden age of Pericles when, under the banner of Sophist teachings, a spirit of flippant irreverence and skepticism about truth was being spread. The problem of our culture is analogous to that which Plato faced: How to replace a decadent and disappearing customary morality with a new culture, the foundations of which are grounded in reason rather than in tribal folkways.

For the modern world, as for the ancient followers of Socrates, the problem is to answer the sophists, the opportunists who set opinion against knowledge, personal expediency against social good. The Greeks failed to establish a new culture based on reason and justice—and thus passed the glory that was Greece. Now we must discover whether we can succeed where Plato and Aristotle failed. To say that they didn't fail, that it was the people who failed because they didn't follow the wisdom of their best philosophers, is to ignore the truth that the problem of civilization is not only to create the vision, clear and strong, but that it is also how to make this vision socially effective. To be sure, the "putting over" of a vision is a matter not of ends but of means; but in our complex world no philosopher worthy of his salt can be merely and only the dreamer of dreams, for the testing of the value of a dream lies in a knowledge of our ability or inability to put it over.

If, like the Greeks, we fail to find the answer to an enduring society, our fate will be the same—except that in our case there may be no opportunity for later generations of men to build upon the ruins and rubble of past empires.

In one sense Socrates did find the answer to the problem, not only for the Greeks but for us moderns as well. Socrates made these things clear: (1) that truth, to deserve the name, must be the same for everybody and not depend upon individual peculiarities; and (2) that this is possible only if all intelligences are in some way one intelligence, having a necessary common content capable of a common interpretation. These things have already been pointed out by Thomas Davidson in his book, *The Education of the Greek People*. Davidson affirms that men think differently only because they think imperfectly, superficially, one-sidedly. *Complete thoughts are the same for everybody*. If one doubts this, think of the bodies of knowledge which have been built up to constitute our present sciences of physics, biology, and the like.

The foregoing generalizations bring us to a surprising conclusion: The solution of the conflicts mentioned previously can come, if it comes at all, only through the further progress of philosophy. This is surprising in the sense that for many persons philosophy is a moribund thing, the subject of philosophy one of the most impractical of all subjects, and its major conclusions, such as they are, of little importance for our working world. But now, it appears, we are asked to return to philosophy as the field which, for us as for Plato, must provide society with vision and guidance. Like Socrates of old, we must again raise such fundamental questions as *what are the conditions for the formation of true ideas?* and *what is the nature of the inner being and the outer world that satisfies these conditions?* According to Davidson, these are the two most fundamental questions the human mind can ask, and philosophy has no other task than to answer them.

These foregoing considerations set the stage for an examination of the philosophy of scientific humanism, a contemporary philosophy which is striving to do for our modern world what Socrates and Plato were attempting to do in the age of Pericles.

Let us therefore state in briefest form what we conceive our problem to be.

The Problem of Our Confused World: How can we organize the mental core of a world mind? How can we create an eye-brain-hand organization on the social level so that people may communicate with each other across the present barriers of races, religions, nations, and languages and achieve understanding and agreements?

How can we bring into being that intellectual and social unity which may make possible (1) an integration of knowledge about nature, man, and society; and (2) produce the cultural synthesis of the world's great civilizations and correct the orphaned state of our own culture?

The Purpose of Scientific Humanism: To produce the "political-economic-ideological synthesis" which will achieve the above two objectives. They will progress together or they will not progress at all. The goal of the attainment of a planetary culture is still in the far distant future, but we must have some prevision of our ultimate objectives in order to set our more immediate goals and plan our strategy.

To supply this higher synthesis which shall present the greatest measure of agreement (integration) with the least area of conflict (differences) is the goal of scientific humanism. This synthesis quite probably would culminate in a planetary civilization; it would have to be a political-economic-ideological synthesis.

Prerequisite: Since in any rational program actions are the results of thoughts, we must agree upon a ***method*** for validating the beliefs in religion, politics, economics, science, and the rest. This is an agreement upon a theory of knowledge, a theory of the origin of ideas, and a method for testing the resulting implications.

Assumption: If we all use the same methods and work with the same body of factual information (empirical data), we will come closer together in our beliefs and attitudes and perhaps ultimately reach agreement in our theories, ideas, and resulting programs. Certainly we shall not get integration unless we consciously strive for this unity and earnestly seek methods of obtaining it.

IV

In an article on "Our Goal Is Unity," Dr. Albert Einstein regretfully took note of "an odious materialistic attitude toward life which leads to the predominance of unrestrained selfishness."[1]

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[1]*Free World,* October, 1944.

But how shall the materialism and selfishness of our culture be corrected? By mathematical invariants? By a Caley's quadratic, by Mobius' surfaces, or by a Dedekind's cut? This would be cold comfort from a warm heart, and Einstein does not exactly propose this way out. He does affirm, however, that physics and mathematics are important to the community because, like all finer cultural endeavors, they are efficient counterweights to this odious materialism.

What evidence is there to support such a statement? Is it true that physics and mathematics are counterweights to materialism? The fact of the matter is that science *as scientists have usually interpreted it* is no more a spiritualizing factor in our society than industry, religion, politics, and the rest. The truth is that the only real counterweight to "materialism" is an "idealism," and this must come out of the very heart of science, if Einstein is to prove his thesis. And so Einstein *can* be correct, except that this job cannot be accomplished merely by mathematicians and physicists studying more and more mathematics and physics as they are now understood and taught. It is not even the spirit of pure science spread over the land which will redeem humanity. What is required is that the researchers who know science should take the data of science, our knowledge about nature and man, and interpret it so as to re-establish the transcendental realism of the great philosophers like Pythagoras and Plato. Then, like Giordano Bruno and Spinoza, we can reverence nature because nature is worthy of reverence.

To realize this dream of bringing knowledge and power together, thus uniting logic and love in the service of life, we need to frame a vision that is not only superb in its sweep and splendor, but so compelling in its sense of social urgency that it can elicit the supreme effort at the unification of our scientific, aesthetic, economic, and political interests and activities and bring into being the planetary civilization that shall personalize that unification. This calls for the integration of science and morals, the synthesis of the world of facts and the world of values. In that manner it will be possible to plan the necessary cultural changes on a world-wide scale.

It needs no prolonged argument to prove that this is a difficult, an enormous, undertaking. But one of the hopeful signs of the times is our increasing realization of the need for such an undertaking. One such sign

is given in the remarks of Dr. Julian Huxley, Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Speaking to UNESCO at Paris, Dr. Huxley[2] observed:

> In order to accomplish its mission successfully, it is not enough for an organization such as UNESCO to have well-defined goals and objectives. UNESCO's actions are predicated on a philosophy which tends to explain the objectives of human existence, and which dictates—or at least suggests—the attitude to be taken when facing the various problems of life. If UNESCO does not have a philosophy which will allow it to consider the issues at stake from a unique viewpoint, the organization will run the risk of taking incomplete, and even contradictory, steps. In any event, it will lack the principle of initiative and the element of inspiration furnished by faith in a general, cohesive doctrine.
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> . . . UNESCO's philosophy will therefore have to be a type of world-wide humanism which would attempt to unite all peoples of the globe and to consider all—collectively and individually—as equals in concepts of human dignity, mutual respect and educational development. This humanism must also be a scientific humanism, since applications of scientific knowledge have given to human culture the greater part of its material foundations and since, too, both the application and the knowledge of science must be closely linked to the application and knowledge of other fields of learning.
>
> A universal scientific humanism, inspired by evolution and unifying the various aspects of human life, must be the philosophical attitude of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

These remarks by Dr. Huxley point up the observation that the old world of cultural *laissez faire* is gone. We can all agree, I believe, that never before in history were the peoples of the world so definitely conscious of standing on the threshold of a new era. This new era must create its own philosophy. It is to be hoped that every creative figure, in physics, economics, politics, the arts, education, and the rest, will contribute his share to the social vision that will be available to all. It is also to be hoped that this enlightened social vision—the product of an experiment in "group thinking"—will be to the next century what Marxism has been to the last century, the fertile source of social experiment and educational change.

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[2]As reported in *Corps Diplomatique,* Washington, D. C., December 15, 1946.

THORSTEIN VEBLEN: MORALIST AND RHETORICIAN

By DANIEL AARON

IT CAN HARDLY BE SAID that Thorstein Veblen's name is a byword in the United States today. Although he enjoys a considerable vogue among students and malcontents, especially among those who share his views and relish his malicious wit, he is certainly not an American hero. Economists suspect him. He is still unclassified, still *sui generis*. His "predilection for shifty inconoclasm" (to use one of his own epithets) distinguishes him from other social philosophers who instinctively make use of the idioms and the values of the middle class.

Irascible, dour, and sardonic—living precariously along the fringes of the American university world he anatomized so mercilessly, Veblen remained during his lifetime a kind of academic rogue, admired by an increasing number of discriminating disciples but never winning the kudos handed out to his less able but more circumspect colleagues. Academic recognition was slow and half-hearted. A belated attempt to press upon him the presidency of the American Economic Association was blocked in 1924 by a group of conservative elder members, men out of sympathy with his personal habits, his intellectual arrogance, and his economic beliefs.

Almost from the beginning of his career, however, the virus of Veblen's thought infected a handful of scholars and writers, and during the ensuing years these ideas were introduced into ever widening circles. Events themselves seemed to justify his most heretical opinions and to confirm his seemingly far-fetched prognostications, and it was natural for men watching the fascinating convolutions of American business during the late '20's and early '30's to discover new insights in Veblen's caustic reflections. While it would be too extreme to say, as some have done, that Veblen was the strategist of the Roosevelt program, it is true that many men at one time associated with the now defunct New Deal—Wallace, Tugwell, Lubin, Frank, Arnold to name only a few of the more

prominent—learned a good deal from this "philosophizing economist." When the names of Lewis Mumford, Stuart Chase, Wesley Mitchell, Kenneth Burke, Max Lerner, Patrick Geddes, Stephen Leacock, Ernest Sutherland Bates, the earlier John Chamberlain and many others are added to the list of complete or partial Veblenites, the extent of his influence upon his own and a later generation can be more properly measured.

Why has Veblen's influence been so pervasive and far-reaching? He was by no means the first American to find fault with business enterprise and its cultural ramifications; the criticisms of money-makers and money-making is as old as the country. Radicals of every description have assailed the activities of the entrepreneur with greater fury and eloquence. There is nothing in Veblen, for instance, to match the invective of Theodore Parker's tirade against the merchants, or Thoreau's cutting references to the slaves of property. Other investigators like Henry Demarest Lloyd have dealt more exhaustively with specific examples of capitalistic chicanery; socio-religious writers, muckrakers, and progressives have exposed the gross inequalities of our society with greater passion.

Veblen's current popularity must be attributed in part to the relevance of his social and economic ideas (his views on war, religion, education, business, and manners are as pertinent today as when he first expressed them), but his general and more enduring appeal lies in his power as a moralist, satirist, and rhetorician. Critics of Veblen have pointed out, and with justification, that he was careless in acknowledging his intellectual debts and given too much to unsupported generalizations. Such accusations are becoming less and less important as Veblen's contemporaries fade into the past. It was Veblen's talent for making the usual unusual and illuminating the commonplace, his gift for stating thinly veiled value-judgments in a startling and provocative manner that makes his writing perennially interesting. In spite of his academic trappings, his conspicuous erudition, and his ostensibly scientific predisposition, it is Veblen the moralist setting out quite deliberately to destroy national myths and unsettle time-honored conventions that will continue to delight and to exasperate future readers.

Veblen's writings must therefore not be judged simply as a critical appraisal of a particular economic system or as a detached and informative analysis of a culture. Had this been true he might never have inspired his

assiduous cult. Far from being an aloof and disembodied intelligence benignly contemplating the antics of earth-dwellers, he was, like most great satirists, a fierce hater who tried but failed to conceal his ethical preconceptions. "We are interested in what is, not what ought to be," he would tell his students, but the venom and anger frequently discernible in his works belied his feigned neutrality. America, in Veblen's eyes, was a land full of Yahoos, and the beneficiaries of our business civilization, the "kept classes," became for him the quintessence of all the human ineptness, stupidity, cruelty, self-delusion, and credulity that satirists have jeered at for centuries.

This critical spirit, this inability to adjust himself to the views of the workaday world have been attributed in part to his Norwegian family background and in part to his personal idiosyncracies. Had he been a more normal person, more at ease in Zion, his enemies have charged, he would have been less disgruntled with what he saw. But the *ad hominem* argument which imputes Veblen's bitterness to his poverty and dismisses him as a crank whose "sense of inferiority caused him to withdraw within himself . . . and sneer at American life and American business" is beside the point. By the same kind of logic college professors would be less radical if their salaries were higher and Jews would never be communists if they were not snubbed at summer resorts. No matter what prompted Veblen to become a renegade, immune, as he described another kind of renegade, "from the inhibitions of intellectual quietism," it does not lessen the accuracy of his observations or blur the truths which his biased perspective enabled him to discern. All radicals, in one sense, are out of step with their times. The nonlogical factors, psycho-neurotic or racial, which alienate a man from the majority will sometimes clarify his vision. Veblen's characterization of Marx as "a theoretician busied with the analysis of economic phenomena" while "at the same time, consistently and tenaciously alert to the bearing which each step in the process of this theoretical work has upon propaganda," might just as well apply to himself.

By setting himself, as it were, upon another planet, Veblen saw an America which differed sharply from the picture in the eyes of the uncritical majority. It was a deluded topsy-turvy America, illogical, irrational, vainglorious, superstitious. Veblen was realistic enough to see that this state of affairs could not be attributed solely to the machinations of an unscrupulous elite, and he had no formula to bring about the Golden

Day. The perpetuation of decrepit institutions whose only function was to keep a parasite class in the ascendancy, simply illustrated man's reluctance to forsake outmoded ideas and adjust himself to new ones.

He made much of the ludicrous paradox of deluded men cheerfully acting against their own best interests, bolstered in their irrationality by the resurgence of old superstitions, clannishness, and national conceit. The common man, swayed by "imponderable" (by "imponderable" he meant "an article of make-believe which has become axiomatic by force of settled habit") was forever befuddled by his "picturesque hallucinations." The retention of obsolescent beliefs in the workings of business enterprise, education, and politics, beliefs "so at variance with the continued life-interests of the community," tended to enhance Veblen's instinctive skepticism about the possibility of a future millenium. Sometimes, he admitted, the instincts of workmanship and efficiency were powerful enough to break through the dams of prescription and precedent and permit "the current of life and cultural growth" to flow again. But episodes of this kind were rare. In general, he concluded, "history records more frequent and more spectacular instances of the triumph of imbecile institutions over life and culture than of peoples who have by force of instinctive insight saved themselves alive out of a desperately precarious institutional situation, such, for instance, as now faces the peoples of Christendom."

But because Veblen's belief in the thickheadedness of the human race existed side by side with a generous awareness of man's potentialities, embodied in the workmanlike or industrial "instincts," he could never maintain the God-like scorn that marks the true misanthrope. The possibilities of human progress were as evident to him as the failure thus far to achieve them. One might almost say that the intense bitterness with which he anatomized human error revealed an inner concern for his fellow men that all his icy disdain could not conceal.

Even if Veblen did not sentimentalize about an ideal state of nature, he expressly repudiated the naïve notions about primitive society espoused by nineteenth-century ethnologists and denied the political and social conclusions of the Hobbesians. If the selfishness and egotism everywhere present in our pecuniary society rested on deep-seated human traits, so did the ideals of friendliness and brotherly love, the "Christian morals," as Veblen called them, which actually antedated the Christian era and

were not vouchsafed to man through divine grace. "And in an obscure and dubious fashion," Veblen wrote of brotherly love, "perhaps sporadically, it recurs throughout the life of human society with such an air of ubiquity as would argue that it is an elemental trait of the species, rather than a cultural product of Christendom."

One can detect behind Veblen's scientific pose a view of man and society which links him with the middle-class reformers he patronizingly disregarded. Thus he could speak of institutions diverting the "genius of the race from its natural bent" and anticipate the time when human nature, no longer savagely repressed, would once more take on its mild and pacific character. The competitive way of life, of comparatively recent outgrowth and coinciding with radical economic transformations, did not encourage Christian forbearance, mutual aid, or "the ties of group solidarity." In the competitive society all "social and civil relations" are formed "for pecuniary ends, and enforced by pecuniary standards." Yet, Veblen observed, even in a business-minded society, the "savage spiritual heritage" of brotherly love could not be extinguished: "this principle is forever reasserting itself in economic matters, in the impulsive approval of whatever conduct is serviceable to the common good and in the disapproval of disserviceable conduct even within the limits of legality and natural right." In the fight between business as "an impersonal, dispassionate, not to say graceless, investment for profit" and "the impulsive bias of brotherly love," he believed that ultimate victory lay with the latter.

The ideas of Veblen, then, despite their outmoded and mechanistic features were not merely destructive and negative. He was no reformer with a systematic program, to be sure, but he at least held forth the prospect of a rational and orderly economic life once mankind had freed itself from "prehensile ideas." Less evangelical than most American nineteenth-century reformers, more dubious about the inevitability of a foreordained progress, he kept his eyes fixed on the world around him and on the problems of the men who inhabited it.

There was something comforting in Veblen's serene naturalism even though it explains some of his shortcomings. He too was aware of the failure of nerve that followed in the wake of the first world war, the "maggoty conceits" of the supernaturalists, and he scornfully assailed the "same fearsome credulity . . . running free and large through secular

affairs as well." He offered no positive remedy, only suggestions. He remained honestly skeptical. But if he did not encourage his readers to dream visions, at least he rid their minds of cant.

II

I have said these things about Veblen with no intention of minimizing his importance as an economist or a sociologist but rather to explain his deep and abiding moral animus. Veblen, I have tried to show, was not only an astute diagnostician of economic institutions; he was also a kind of splenetic prophet. Like Marx he attracted disciples by his startling insights and remorseless logic, but his appeal was not limited to the reason. He quite consciously overemphasized and oversimplified. He was fond of dramatic dichotomies or what the semanticists call the two-valued orientation. He juxtaposed "business" and "industry," the entrepreneur and the engineer, the instinct of predation and the instinct of workmanship, the absentee owner and the "underlying population." These distinctions, more ethical perhaps than scientific, carry an emotive appeal and imply unstated preconceptions. They offer further proof that Veblen was quite capable of deliberate distortion and bias despite his pose of Olympian detachment. When a man undertakes to change or subvert public opinion, particularly an opinion which is itself engendered by lies and distortions, facts and logical judgments must be used; but it was part of Veblen's strategy to present his arguments as colorfully and as shockingly as possible in order to lure his victims away from their trenches of accustomed thought and startle them into seeing old things in new ways. Veblen's learning, his probing intelligence, and his moral insight would have won him an audience in any event, but his style assured him of a wider hearing than he otherwise might have received.

What Veblen did was to destroy holy shibboleths by means of a language ordinarily identified with ritualistic or pedantic expression; he was, in other words, reverently irreverent. His technique, useful as a kind of protective coloration to misdirect potential enemies, suggested the outrageous solemnity of Swift's *A Modest Proposal* and the weightiness and aloofness of Gibbon's chronicle of Rome. The irony lurking beneath the mannered latinisms of both Gibbon and Veblen was enhanced by their pretended judiciousness and scientific exactness. Gibbon, however, was a better writer than Veblen. He had a more sensitive ear for prose rhythms,

and he maintained with more ease and elegance his role of the remote expositor. When Veblen overdid his magisterial nonsense, as he was apt to do in *The Theory of the Leisure Class,* his playfulness became elephantine. But he could write in a perfectly straightforward style if he chose, and in books like *The Higher Learning in America, The Engineers and the Price System, Imperial Germany,* and *The Nature of the Peace* and in many of his essays and articles, he often forsook his more elaborate stylistic disguise and wrote with a crisp and stinging directness.

In his best writing he demonstrated both his bias and his artistry and turned ideas made blunt by excessive handling into sharp cutting instruments. For style is more than embellishment and contributes immeasurably to the total impression; shreds of additional meaning cling to the apt metaphor, and the bald informative statement is not necessarily the most accurate. Veblen announced his message (men are potentially decent damned fools who honor their oppressors and habitually act against their own best interests) in a series of amusing paradoxes. His strong personal feelings he conveyed through the use of a loaded diction.

Most critics when they praise Veblen's style are thinking primarily of his talent as a phrasemaker. Such unusual but now familiar collocations as "conspicuous consumption," "trained incapacity," "business sabotage," "sagacious restriction of output," "collusive sobriety," and "blameless cupidity," have become the well known hallmarks of Veblenese. This device of balancing opposites, the arbitrary linking of words with respectable and dishonorable connotations, is a literary expedient not usually employed by scientific writers. It resembles the oxymoron, or the *conceit* used by the metaphysical poets in the seventeenth century to achieve a new and shocking perspective. Veblen's readers, trained to the automatic response, were sometimes puzzled by the seeming incongruity of his phrases. Does not "business" suggest efficiency, honesty, respectability, practical results? Is not "sabotage" associated with anarchy, waste, treachery? In joining the meritorious with the blameworthy, Veblen was of course making a value judgment and imprisoning a whole philosophy in a single phrase.

By using language in this way he reduced the prestige of business, contemplating it, as it were, through the wrong end of a telescope. The words *petty, nugatory, conciliatory, reliable, cupidity,* when applied to businessmen are less pejorative and picturesque than *pirate* or *robber*

baron or *Titan* or *tycoon,* but they strip away the romance and glamor which so frequently has mitigated dishonesty on a grand scale. The businessman, Veblen is saying, is not an audacious and genial freebooter, a gambler, an unscrupulous but God-struck empire builder. He has none of the larger wisdom. He is small, mean, circumspect, and useless—a creature formed by the price system and victimized by the values of his own pecuniary culture.

As a more specific illustration of Veblen's artifice, consider the sentence with which Veblen winds up his discussion of the similarity between religious and business institutions. The very fact that he identifies the Church with Big Business is significant, if not unique, but the sentence itself deserves closer analysis:

> All told—if it were possible—it will be evident that the aggregate of human talent currently consumed in this fabrication of vendible imponderables in the nth dimension, will foot up to a truly massive total, even after making a reasonable allowance, of, say, some thirty-three and one-third per cent., for average mental deficiency in the personnel which devotes itself to this manner of livelihood.

Here the language of economics, morally toneless, is applied to a subject which is not ordinarily associated with the marketplaces. The conceit ("fabrication of vendible imponderables") not only puns on the word "fabrication" but relates in a particularly insulting manner the tricks of salesmanship with spiritual salvation. Veblen, in an earlier passage, had been admiring the "perseverance, tact, and effrontery" of the Propaganda of the Faith, that "magnificent" institution whose "enterprise in sales publicity" makes "the many secular adventures in salesmanship" seem raw and crude by comparison. Now, in the sentence quoted above, he joins the most material and the most spiritual of institutions, identifying them both with Mumbo-Jumbo and deceit. Business and the Church, exploiting the credulity of the "underlying population," take on the "same air of stately benevolence and menacing solemnity." Disarming, insolent, or official—always ostensibly neutral, Veblen can slant his judgments without explicitly committing himself.

If the celebrated professional manner serves as a blind to Veblen's serious intentions, so must his foolery be interpreted as a ruse to circumvent the watchdogs of principle and property. Much may be said in jest which would be intolerable if uttered with perfect seriousness, and Veblen

is apt to adopt the character of the playful satirist when he is being the most subversive. His humor is very largely the humor of incongruity, the grotesque or willful rearrangement of conventional word patterns into droll and unusual combinations: business schools specialize in "widening the candidates' field of ignorance"; academic opportunists succeed by virtue of a "ready versatility of convictions and a staunch loyalty to their bread." But Veblen also likes to embellish his writing with witty epigrammatic touches. Illegitimate births "may be rated as an undesigned triumph of the hormones over the proprieties." The "watchful waiting" policy of the cautious entrepreneur is likened to "a toad who has reached years of discretion and has found his appointed place along some frequented run where many flies and spiders pass and repass on their way to complete that destiny which it has pleased an all-seeing and merciful Providence to call them." The captain of industry, he continues, is motivated by the same "safe and sane strategy" of "sound business principles" that governs the toad. "There is a certain bland sufficiency spread across the face of such a toad so circumstanced, while his comely bulk gives assurance of pyramidal stability of principles."

Veblen's dead-pan manner, according to some critics, places him in the same tradition as the frozen-faced humorists of the frontier and the "cracker barrel" school, but this resemblance is only superficial. As a general rule American humorous writers (the more consciously "literary" and popular ones, at any rate) have ridiculed the aberrations from the norm and indirectly supported national prejudices. Primarily they are the amiable guardians of the middle classes. Veblen made use of the stock American trick of being seriously unserious, but instead of jesting at the deviations from conventional behavior, he flouted the very foundations of bourgeois folkways.

He is, in fact, much closer to Thoreau than, let us say, to Artemus Ward. Both Thoreau and Veblen, diametrically opposed in so many ways, announced ideas outrageous to their contemporaries; both, to borrow Emerson's description of Thoreau, resembled "some philosophical woodchuck or magnanimous fox"; both, if we are to believe the accounts of their friends, were reserved and antisocial; both, in their principal works, revealed the craziness of everyday life and exposed the conspiracy of institutions; and both—the one directly and the other by implication—

advocated the drastic simplification of living and the stripping away of unessentials. All of these attitudes and characteristics were incorporated in the sardonic jokes they made at the expense of moldy cultural hangovers and established patterns of conduct. Unlike the majority of American humorists, folksy and homely, Thoreau and Veblen were the queer ones who stood beyond the pale and made fun of the solid citizens.

III

When a man feels strongly about the bad state of the world and wants to put his feelings into words, he can convey his disapproval and his suggestions for amendment in an infinite number of ways. He can spoof and debunk. He can expatiate warmly and tolerantly. He can fume, tabulate, preach, lament. The vehicle he chooses for self-expression will depend partly upon his personal make-up and partly, perhaps, on the degree of concern he feels for the situation he wants to remedy.

Thoreau, hostile to the values of his generation and holding fast to what his contemporaries (had they read him) would have regarded as an incomprehensible position, spoke with measured force and insolent assurance. Obligated to no one and unintimidated by a public opinion he habitually disregarded, he affronted his world with impunity; requiring no elaborate subterfuges, he subverted society in broad daylight.

Veblen could not afford to make the frontal assault. As the angry recluse and mocking Prometheus, he required a style and vocabulary which would muffle his rage and allow him to stalk his victims without their being conscious of his intentions. His milieu was the University, ostensibly dedicated to the quest for truth but guided in actuality by a "meretricious subservience" to the Philistines. Veblen may be said to have betrayed the betrayers by thinking unholy thoughts on holy ground and by using the ritualistic paraphernalia of scholarship—ordinarily employed in buttressing the social order and impressing the gullible—for profoundly subversive purposes. Had he been a cynic or debunker, content to shock and to smash images, he could have been dismissed as a troublesome smart-aleck. But Veblen was too much of a moralist and a conspirator. He diverted his readers while he systematically undermined their social order. He attacked the institutions and culture of capitalism while at the same time laying the foundations for a more humane and natural way of life.

THE ALLEGED REVOLUTION IN ECONOMIC THEORY

By JOHN S. GAMBS

ABOUT FIFTY YEARS AGO the American economist, Thorstein Veblen, wrote several essays attacking the standard economic theory of his day. He struck particularly at the preconceptions underlying the work of his contemporaries, Alfred Marshall, John B. Clark, and their followers. His shafts went to their psychological assumptions, their deductive methods, their unconscious ethical bias, the sterility of their conclusions. He accused his colleagues of being mentally arrested in the eighteenth century, at best; at worst, of cultural regression to medieval scholasticism. None had been tapped by the "new spirit" of the nineteenth century; none touched by the forces that had stirred Darwin, Ibsen, Wagner (and, of course, Veblen himself).

A large number of his readers have, during the past generation, come to share Veblen's opinions—more or less. Those American economists who have shared them more are often named "institutional" economists —a rather misleading name. Professor Allan Gruchy, of the University of Maryland, uses the word "holistic," which may be better. Those who have shared Veblen's opinions less remain, in most cases, orthodox or standard economists, yet standard economists who feel they must amend orthodox theory to meet at least some of the Veblenian objections.

A similar process has been going on elsewhere than in the United States, for Veblen, though unique in many things, was only one among many writers to hold up to hostile view certain preconceptions of standard theory. Thus for several decades in the Western World, part of the effort of standard economists has gone into the work of revising some of their theory in the light of institutional criticism. This revision—such as it is—has not often been the outcome of attempts at direct reply; it has rather been done unconsciously, or as the result of a diffuse sense that certain new ideas were stirring, for institutionalism has affected men as climate, not weather, affects them.

Since Veblen's death, about twenty years ago, a great depression and a great war have unmoored much that was once tied fast. Standard economic theory has, in this period, undergone vast changes—so much so that men are speaking of a recent "revolution" in standard economic theory; or, more specifically, of the "Keynesian revolution," for the late John Maynard Keynes is by all odds the most important economist of the last two decades. Not entirely unrelated to the "Keynesian revolution," and certainly of considerable significance to recent standard theory, is the work done in the field of monopoly, quasimonopoly, imperfect competition, and—the reverse of the coin—monopolistic buying. Here, too, standard economic theory has come forward with novel ideas. Its practitioners have indeed found multiple ways of invigorating their doctrines.

The purpose of this article is to assess the Keynesian "revolution" and ancillary developments by Veblenian criteria. The primacy of Veblen as an American critic of standard theory makes it natural that later and lesser critics should use him as their starting point. Veblen suggests not only the criteria, but also the method, which is to look to underlying preconceptions rather than to the main body of the argument. We, too, shall give greatest attention to the preconceptions underlying recent developments.

* * *

Let us first take a look at the "Keynesian revolution"—hailed by some as the dawn of a new era, but viewed by others with a more nearly level gaze. John Maynard Keynes wrote a book, published in 1936, on the then-current depression and allied matters.[1] This book has had more influence on economic theory than any other book written during the past thirty or forty years. Like many other great works, this one means different things to different readers and appears to have inconsistencies. Moreover, it does not always conform to other statements made by the author at approximately the same period of his development. His theories, for example, though embraced by political radicals are also such that "a conservative candidate could conduct a political campaign largely on quotations from the *General Theory*."[2] Yet it is not entirely hopeless to attempt

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[1]The full title: *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. New York, 1936.

[2]D. McC. Wright, *American Economic Review*, vol. XXXV, no. 3, p. 287.

to summarize him. First, he says, the rate of interest is not so important a regulator of economic activity as had once been thought. Second, because interest is not sufficiently flexible, people keep on saving when they ought, for the general economic good, to be spending. Finally, under conditions of insufficient spending, too much is produced; businessmen are disappointed in their expectations; they curtail their operations; not only are depression and unemployment among the results, but a new semipermanent equilibrium may also be established, in which low levels of economic activity become chronic. J. A. Schumpeter with a slightly different emphasis, has made an admirable summary. Here, he says, is "a doctrine that may not actually say but can easily be made to say both that 'who tries to save destroys real capital' and that, *via* saving, 'the unequal distribution of income is the ultimate cause of unemployment.' *This* is what the Keynesian Revolution amounts to."[3]

So much for Keynes's central ideas. It should be added that the timeliness of his book; the charm of his writing; his authority as an economist; his public position in England, not entirely unlike that of Mr. Bernard Baruch in this country—all conspired to win quick recognition for his theories in many quarters.

Now for the other great novelty of standard economic theory. In the past twenty years monopoly and the imperfections of competition have received much attention at the hands of standard theory. The outstanding names are Edward Chamberlin and Joan Robinson. They call attention to the pervading presence of monopoly and its variants in economic life. They discuss exploitation, advertising, the great difference wrought by different trademarks on otherwise similar commodities—at least in the eyes of the average and frequently ignorant customer. Their work throws doubt on whether the basic ingredients of land, labor, and capital are often combined in the most favorable proportions to achieve maximum benefits in the production of wealth. They seem to sense better the roles of retaliation and even coercion in economic life than did Alfred Marshall, J. B. Clark, and their compeers. Nonperfect competition may cause price indeterminacy; thus bargaining, including collective bargaining and coercion, may have strong theoretical justification.

[3]J. A. Schumpeter, *American Economic Review*. vol. XXXVI, no. 4, p. 517.

Much of what I have written above suggests the heretical pen of Veblen and the writings of some of his followers. Are modern standard economic theorists coming to share the views of institutionalists? We shall see. Readers may remember that I do not propose to discuss substantive matters much; the method will be to inquire into basic and often unconscious assumptions, or preconceptions. Another rule of the game is that hereafter I shall often use the names of Keynes, Robinson and Chamberlin metonymically—that is, the names will symbolize not only the individuals but their followers as well.

The Veblenian economist's flair for economic disorganization draws him irresistibly toward such topics as imperfect competition and depressions, and he is in advance sympathetically disposed toward students of such problems. The followers of Veblen have themselves spent much time studying the business cycle, monopoly, and the imperfections of competition. They welcome the recent contributions of standard theorists. They welcome the expanded opportunities to work with them on certain practical problems—opportunities that did not exist fifteen years ago. But for the rest, it is clear that the two schools are as far apart as ever. Representatives of the two groups differ as do Parsee and Christian, not as High-Church and Low-Church do; or as rivers differ from seas, not as seas differ from each other. Not only do their economic worlds differ, but their concepts of the whole world are radically different. The mechanisms of communication between them sometimes break down and neither can make himself clear to the other.

One "small, significant fact" in Taine's sense, must be given. Wesley Mitchell is the American economist who has most rigorously carried on the Veblenian tradition. The chief labors of the past thirty-five years of his life have gone into a study of the business cycle. Keynes, in his book on the business cycle, has no place for Mitchell in his index; and quick re-thumbing reveals no mention of his name in the text. This is not oversight, for Mitchell has long had a distinguished reputation internationally; least of all is there implication here of an unrecognized intellectual debt. Keynes owes nothing to Mitchell. Mitchell has nothing to teach him. Discourse between the two is virtually impossible.

Why is communion between institutionalist and standard theorist so limited, and why does the former look upon the "Keynesian revolution"

and the imperfect competers with such a cold eye? The reasons are the old ones. Institutionalists feel that much of what Veblen said about his contemporaries can be said again about Chamberlin, Robinson, and Keynes. Here I shall not, however, marshal all the old arguments. For this I have good reasons. First, an indictment possessing too many counts can be ineffective; I propose to discuss only two points. Next, the old arguments have become stale; those whom they are meant to reach no longer hear them, as city dwellers no longer hear the steady urban undertones. The points I shall make, if not brand-new, have at least been well shined up.

My first point relates to the validity of an abstraction made use of by all standard theorists. The imperfect competers and the Keynesians are studying some of the most significant phenomena of economic life with highly inappropriate tools—as if one were to go fishing in the deep seas with a minnow net. The shape, strength, quality and sharpness of their tools are determined by a basic concept, named "competitive equilibrium." This tool has long been considered defective by Veblenians, but their reasons have not been given in full. I hope I shall be able to add to the argument. "Competitive equilibrium" is the hypothetical situation which exists when the economic system is working perfectly; when effort to make goods is exactly equal to pleasure in consuming them; when nobody—landlord, worker, manager—is overpaid or underpaid; when no human effort or resource is wasted—that is, when the ratios of land and men, men and machines, machines and land, are such that in no individual economic operation or in the economy as a whole, is there redundance or penury of men, acres, or tools; when there is neither boom, revival, depression nor recession; when there are no tariffs, no monopolies, no unfair competition, no restrictive immigration laws; no warfare; no "building of the peace"; when various other similar conditions, too numerous to mention, are fulfilled.

Now there are several ways of evaluating the work of somebody who uses the concept of "competitive equilibrium" as his jumping-off place and standard of comparison. One is to say that a fundamental concept so completely out of harmony with reality can lead the investigator only into areas of further unreality—and this is partly how institutional economists attack standard economists. Another is to say that certain assump-

tions devoid of reality, have been demonstrably useful to science. For example, physics has assumed a perfect machine, one in which work put in equals work put out; in such a machine there is no friction, no waste. This concept of a perfect but unreal machine is a guide to investigation, a norm by which to measure performance, and an entirely defensible fantasy. Should not standard economics have the same right to a useful fantasy as physics has?

If there were nothing else to say, the answer would certainly be "yes." But there is a good deal more to say. Abstractions, symbols, and the like are of course required in the sciences. The easiest scientific abstraction to justify is the ikon, or model, of a *real* thing. The terrestrial globe used in classrooms, is a good example; it is a faithful miniature of something known to exist. For a large number of purposes it is both useful and true. Maps are also justifiable ikons, and have their manifold purposes. Diagrams of atoms and molecules are magnified and conventionalized ikons of units of matter.

It is doubtful whether any standard economist would ever have been willing to go firmly on record as stating that the concept of "competitive equilibrium" is this kind of ikon. Often he has intimated as much, but usually he has conceded—as astronomers, geographers, physicists, and chemists do not have to concede—that correspondence between reality and ikon is not great. Pressed, the standard theorist would even have admitted that any correspondence between the two was accidental if not surrealist. Keynes, Robinson, and Chamberlin and their disciples, go a step farther, and forever destroy, through the attention they give to monopoly, and business cycles, any correspondence between reality and ikon. Thus we may say that modern standard economists have, even from the unsympathetic viewpoint of institutional theory, done at least one major service to their brand of economic theory: they have cleared up whatever confusion lingered in the minds of their less enlightened brethren concerning the correspondence of ikon and reality. In this they have moved towards the institutional position, which has always rejected that ikon entirely.

But Keynes, Robinson, and Chamberlin still make paradoxical use of the concept of "competitive equilibrium." It still determines the phenomena of which they take cognizance, their conclusions, their whole

method of handling problems. They use it as a norm. Perhaps they have completely stopped using it as an ikon, even in absent-minded moments, but certainly they have not stopped using it as a working symbol. How can this be? Is there any justification for this?

They still use the concept because they feel—one must suppose—that, as in the natural sciences, some abstractions conform very little to reality, yet have considerable value in pushing forward knowledge. Not all abstractions take the form of simple ikons, like globes, maps, diagrams of particles of matter. This is true, of course. Earlier I likened the concept of "competitive equilibrium" to the physicist's perfect machine. This was a good simile, because the perfect machine, though a very useful concept, is pure fantasy. It is not an ikon or miniature of something that does exist, for if it were that, then the perfect machine itself would be a reality and no ikon would be needed. It is a dream toward which waking life tends, as "competitive equilibrium" is something towards which economic phenomena in a capitalistic society are supposed to tend.

What has the institutionalist to say to this? Can he deny that here standard economics has patterned itself faithfully on a method or device that has proved its soundness in the physical sciences? Well, I can try.

First, I would say that the concept of the perfect machine is only one of many fruitful concepts of physics; it can therefore be taken up or dropped at will. Theories concerning the volume of work done by the atomic bomb, for example, need not base themselves on the "work-put-in equals work-put-out" equation. Other theories or equations are at hand. This does not mean that physics is indeterminate, or that relativity rules the world; it means only that as new phenomena are observed or brought under the dominion of theory or become central rather than peripheral objects of scrutiny, theory itself is deepened and widened and changed. Institutional economists charge that standard economists still rely on their one and only concept even when they observe, ponder, or bring under the dominion of theory, phenomena heretofore unscrutinized. For it must be remembered that, until recently, the study of monopoly and of the business cycle were among the peripheral problems of standard economic theory. Böhm-Bawerk told his readers that a theory of economic crises should form the last or next-to-last chapter in a system of economic theory. Commenting on this, the American institutionalist, Wesley Mit-

chell, writes: "The converse view, that ideas developed in the study of business fluctuations may lead to reformulations of economic theory, still strikes most economists as strange."[4] To return to the analogy, it is as if physicists refused to explain fully the work done by an atomic bomb until somebody found a way of somehow applying the work-put-in equals work-put-out equation to the new phenomenon. This would be a *tour de force,* but it probably can be done—after a fashion—with considerable loss to knowledge and science and truth.

Second, I would call attention to the pragmatic and human quality of the concept of the ideal machine. Unlike the law of the conservation of energy—under which the concept of the perfect machine is only one case—the work-in-work-out equation is a purely human truth. That is, there are no machines in a universe devoid of human beings, and in such a universe, there is no way of bridging the gap between this particular fantasy and reality—for the bridge between the dream of the perfect machine and reality is human desire and activity. In a limited sense, therefore, and without prejudice to other philosophical views, some of the fancies of science are pragmatic, and "true" only because they can be made to serve human ends.

Governments, leaders of business, of the church, of labor, of the arts, and the mass of mankind at large, are willing to attempt to approximate the perfect machine. You and I and anybody we could name are willing to oil our machinery, to accept the need for ball bearings or the cost of true machining of parts, because we are willing to take action looking toward the approximation of a useful fantasy. By our buying and voting dollars, we express effective approval of a machine which performs as much work as before with less or cheaper fuel—thus supporting the efforts of those who are bridging the gap between this world and a world of fancy. In other words, it is we, as aspiring, desiring human beings who give validity to the pipe dreams of science. The pipe dream is "true" because it is made in the image and likeness of our wants.

The perfect and fanciful economic system used as the basis for standard economic theory lacks validity in part, not because it is a pipe

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[4]*Business Cycles: the Problem and Its Setting.* New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., 1927, p. 452.

dream, but because nobody really wants it—except perhaps a few thousand professional economists. And even they might not like it if they really could have it. This fact may startle those who believe that if any truth is unassailable it is that Americans, at least, have long endorsed, and are daily reaffirming their endorsement of, a free, competitive society. It is true that there is much serious talk and even some frantic shouting about free competition, as there is about the cardinal virtues, but the demand for it is not effective; that is, we talk about liking something we are not willing or able to pay for. Our tariffs, monopolies, call for governmental intervention and regulation—these are the irrefragable facts. They are what we want. We like others to compete; ourselves, we prefer a sheltered position.

This granted, it will be objected that I have made human love of a concept the criterion of its truth. Suppose modern human beings, like the Greeks of antiquity, had no great interest in improved machinery—or, suppose, even, that like the citizens of Erewhon, they had a distaste for machines. Would this distaste affect the validity of the work-put-in equals work-put-out concept of physics? The obvious answer is, no. Few people like disease, earthquakes, floods, storms at sea; most people are indifferent to eclipses, sun spots, or the speed of sound, yet the theories explaining these phenomena are not subject to attack on the grounds of human dislike or unconcern.

But I have not really made human aspiration a criterion for truth. I have only said that some sort of bridge must be found between certain scientific fantasies and reality. One bridge appears to be human aspiration and I can see no other in the example here being considered. If the bridge is lacking, the fantasy itself appears to lack human usefulness. The question of the truth of a fantasy is not at issue; the issue revolves around the usefulness of a given fantasy. According to the criterion I have used, the fantasy of "competitive equilibrium" is useless rather than false, and useless because there is no bridge between it and reality. Its truth has not been impugned—at least not yet.

As to that—whether or not the concept itself is a true one—this I leave in the air, partly because I do not think the answer is very important, partly because of limitations of space, partly because the question involves metaphysical speculation. I would call attention, however, to the fact that the "competitive-equilibrium" concept does in fact rest on questionable

premises, such as Jeremy Bentham's psychological theories, the rationalistic doctrines of the eighteenth century, and the system of natural rights. It scarcely seems possible that anything based on notions so completely at variance with modern thought should be "true." The concept of the perfect machine, on the other hand, though itself fantastic, rests on the law of the conservation of energy which, if inapplicable to all problems of energy, is of unquestioned validity within its sphere.

To all this the standard economist can make two replies: first, that the fantasy of "competitive equilibrium," with all its faults, has taught us a lot about economic life and second, that until institutionalists, or others, find a true ikon or provide a better fantasy, the fiction of "competitive equilibrium" will have to serve.

There are counter-replies. It is true that a defective ikon or symbol or fantasy may lead to useful truths. Medieval and earlier navigation to Lübeck or Venice or Phoenicia was not much hampered by the ikon of a flat world; John Dalton's false ikon of an indivisible atom nevertheless permitted a great development of chemistry; the Wright brothers flew on a false ikon of the perfect wing-shape. But I do not think the physical sciences continue long to work with ikons shown to be false. The trouble with false abstractions is not that they yield utterly false results, but that they handicap development if they outlive their usefulness. It is worth noting that the fantasy of "competitive equilibrium" has hung on and on during decades in which the ikons and fantasies of astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology have changed radically. Is it reasonable to suppose that the men in economics from Adam Smith through Marshall were more competent to lay down an unchanging ikon or fantasy than the men in physical science from Copernicus through Dalton?

Now as to a better symbol: can institutionalists supply a better one than "competitive equilibrium?" I think they can. In their doctrines of coercion, of the polarity of constructive and destructive propensities, in their "self-generating" theories of the business cycle, lie useful materials for the creation, not of a mere fantasy, but of an ikon of economic activity. The job has been done in part and the result needs to be perfected, and if more men and women of the genius of Keynes, Robinson, Chamberlin, and of their brilliant followers could be enlisted in this task, it would soon be done. I do not think this ikon, judging from previews,

will be a very pretty one; but the aesthetics of ikons play no role in their validity, unfortunately.[5]

* * *

We now come to the second major preconception of the new standard theorists, and to the examination of its validity. This one is easy and can be done succinctly. As I have said, the ideal of "competitive equilibrium" is still the norm in the work of Keynes and the others. They realize, however, that there has been considerable backsliding from the norm. How do they expect to get us back on the right road? The ultimate answer is governmental intervention. Between this ultimate answer and a specific problem (like a depression) lie many ingenious and delightful measures of theirs from the euthanasia of the *rentier* to the abolition of stock-exchange gambling. Perhaps such implementing measures can be found in their most complete development in Abba Lerner's *Economics of Control* (New York, 1944). In any event, government is supposed to give us, now that it has been duly informed of recent developments in standard economic theory, a new system of free enterprise, having all the benefits and efficacy of "competitive equilibrium." To what governments may we look for this? Governments that have long tolerated trusts and cartels? Governments that are themselves often battlefields for conflicts not resolved on the marketplace? Feeble governments that divide final authority among several competing entities? Governments that let unemployment fall on the politically outcast? These are the kinds of governments we know and are likely to know, and to dream about what other kinds might do is to pass the buck from economics to politics.

The standard theorist will reply that government is outside his scope. Let political economy concern itself with the problem, he will say. Here we find a special case of an old complaint made by Veblenians against standard theory, namely, that standard economists tend to delimit their scope so narrowly that what they do have to say is sometimes scarcely worth saying, even when it is unimpeachable. To one outside the dominion of standard theory, this washing-of-one's-hands technique suggests ludicrous analogies. It is as if physicians were to demonstrate how certain circulatory

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[5]For the previews, see: Thorstein Veblen, *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (New York, 1914); John Gambs, *Beyond Supply and Demand* (New York, 1946).

diseases, in the absence of gravity, would not exist. Reminded that gravity is a fact of cardinal importance, they would reply that the earth's attraction is outside their scope; let astronomers or physicists attend to that part of the cure!

On this, the position of the institutionalist is that economics is one of the more basic of the social sciences and that it can probably throw more light on them than they can throw on it. This statement is not made arrogantly or dogmatically, and the position is held tentatively. In any event, the economist has no right to lay down normative policies to be implemented by practitioners of the other social sciences without regard to the realities of those sciences.

* * *

And so we find that neither the "Keynesian revolution" nor the other novelties of standard economic theory in recent years, are very impressive from the institutionalist viewpoint. Much has been done that is good and interesting. Keynes's high intelligence, wit, and shrewd observation have enriched the literature of economics. Robinson and Chamberlin and their followers have likewise added fresh material and original viewpoints to the content of the science of wealth. All have dealt in certain limited ways so well with such realistic problems as monopoly and the business cycle that institutionalists deplore their not having taken the next step: complete repudiation of methods no longer useful. In a recent article, John M. Clark suggests that perhaps the "Keynesian revolution" is only the prelude to a truly grandiose revolution in economic theory. If this expectation is fulfilled, and if standard and institutional economists can join hands in fulfilling it, their combined light may yet shine as more than a candle in this naughty world.

WHAT PRICE FEDERAL DEBT?

By EDGAR E. POULTON

As OWERS OR OWNERS, all of us have a stake in the federal debt. Our stake is a large one, too, for the debt itself is large, currently around $257 billion. Such a huge amount is all but meaningless to most of us. This sum in one-dollar bills laid end to end would reach a thousand times around the earth at the equator. It is not this physical measure, however, but the economic and political dimensions of the debt with which we are here concerned.

The first boundary of the debt is doubtless psychological. During the war while the debt was piling up no one haggled over the price of life or freedom. But now that debt retirement has become an alternative to reduced taxes, and peacetime expenditures are feared to involve a federal deficit, the old alarm is reappearing. Sooner than we wish we may have to decide whether a growing public debt is worse than mounting unemployment, or whether debt reduction has priority over various individual projects to bolster the economic strength and welfare of the nation.

One thing is clear. We must get used to having a large federal debt. It is doubtful that any of us will live to see it reduced to its prewar level; and for this we should feel more assurance than regret. The measures necessary to erase or drastically reduce the debt in the next few years or decades would surely be more upsetting to our economic system than those which permit us to tolerate it with a minimum of trouble.

There is no need to dwell on the importance of the country's total resources in determining our ability to bear a $257 billion debt. Obviously we are better able than tiny Luxembourg, or famished India, or backward Bolivia to bear a debt of this size. We have a large and skilled labor force, adequate land and mineral resources, and the world's most efficient organization of production. These things we take for granted as setting the outside limit of our debt capacity.

It is with other determinants of the burden of public debt that we are presently concerned. These factors are related more directly to the debt itself; and, in general, their dimensions are more elastic than those set by

long-run economic forces. They may be briefly described as (a) what there is to show for the debt; (b) the level of national income; (c) the distribution of the debt and of the taxes it makes necessary; (d) the cost of debt service; and (e) price level trends.

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The association of the federal debt with wasteful expenditures no doubt colors the bad opinion held of public debt generally. Most of our experience has been with the kind of public debt which has least justification. Even during the '30's, when war on unemployment involved relatively slight public deficits, the scrupulous avoidance of profitable areas reserved for private enterprise prevented the use of borrowed public funds in the best possible way.

Public debt or investment represents only another refinement of the division of labor. It may or may not be less productive than private debt; each case must be judged on its merits. It is now recognized that many wants can be satisfied most efficiently, and others only, by the people acting together through their government. Specialization is simply carried to a finer point, and taxation and public debt are used as its instruments.

Most of our present federal debt arose out of the heavy expenditures during World War II; and most of these were dissipated in the loss of lives and material resources. Yet an appreciable part of this debt increment represented real material gain. Wartime expenditures enlarged our capacity to produce ships, airplanes, aluminum, synthetic rubber, and many another item. The power of the atom, whose final significance we can only conjecture, was released through government research. A large number of our people learned new skills, and technical advances made during the war provide the basis for improved living standards.

Yet whatever the nature of the assets associated with the public debt, they alone do not determine the soundness of the debt. The government's assets are represented not only by its own physical and financial resources, but also by a power of levy against all private wealth. The sanctions behind public debt offer a final guarantee of solvency that private debtors cannot command. The realization of this fact accounts largely for the popular dislike of public debt, because we all have a contingent liability.

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It is axiomatic that the higher a person's income, the better able he is to meet his obligations. Here is one case where the analogy between the individual and the nation holds true. For the larger our national income, the easier it is to pay the interest on the federal debt, and gradually repay part of the principal. A fixed interest charge of around $5 billion a year is obviously easier to meet out of a national income of $150 billion annually than it is with a national income of only $50 billion. These are not arbitrary figures; they represent realistic ranges.

Maintenance of a high level of production and income is therefore of transcendent importance. This is a matter outside the province of debt management itself, except as increases in the federal debt may be necessary in order to sustain high production and employment. A given increase in public expenditures financed by borrowing may be multiplied several times in additions to the national income, and thereby provide the means for meeting and even exceeding the increment to the public debt. A constantly increasing federal debt would impose no great burden if the national income continued to increase at a rate roughly equal to its trend over the last few decades.

Recent attention to economic aggregates has emphasized that what is cost to one person is income to another. This fact provides one of the most cogent reasons for discounting the burden of the federal debt. To go further, however, and dismiss the debt as inconsequential because we owe it to ourselves erroneously assumes a community of individual interests. For the transfer of income made necessary by the debt involves frictions which may reduce the level of national income, either by abortion or by leakage during transfer.

The simple administrative task of passing a larger proportion of the national income through the public coffers requires the diversion of energies which might better be used in other ways. This direct cost, however, is almost certainly secondary to the indirect effects of higher taxes attributable to public debt. It would be only a coincidence if interest payments were exactly equal to the taxes they make necessary. Moreover, the ramifying and elusive effects of higher taxes on production and income via their influence on business decisions would have to be taken into account. Whether taxes traceable to the federal debt increase or reduce

income depends finally on the character of the tax system and the holders and composition of the debt.

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Since taxes can never be neutral, the servicing or repayment of public debt necessarily involves a redistribution of income. That part of their interest-income which recipients have not contributed in taxes must come from tax levies elsewhere, or by borrowing, or possibly by issue of money. There is, of course, nothing new about this. But as the size of the interest payments and the accompanying need for taxes become greater, the frictions multiply. The crucial point is that the opportunity for changing the distribution of income is enhanced as a greater amount of it passes through public hands.

The considerations which determine who is to bear the cost of public debt differ from those which determine liability for private debt. A private debtor associates the interest he pays directly with the benefit received, or at least expected, in connection with a given enterprise. But the tax that a person pays to finance interest payments on public debt, perhaps to himself, is not accompanied by a direct *quid pro quo*. The tax is a compulsory levy; it bears only a remote relation to the benefit received, especially since the bulk of our taxes are levied according to the principle of ability to pay. The fact that it is modifiable, and known to be so, by the exertion of political pressure makes it a matter of ceaseless contention.

To the extent that public debt is a substitute for private debt, an increase in the public debt no doubt opens the way to a more equal distribution of income. Yet it must be emphasized that debt, of whatever kind, is a conservative financial instrument, for it tends to perpetuate and accentuate the existing division of property and income. The persons who make loans are naturally those who have the means to do so—i.e. an income larger than they care to or are able to spend on current consumption. At a time when excessive and idle savings are recognized to be a crucial barrier to full production and employment, the growth of debt compounds the difficulty of securing the more equalized distribution of income necessary for continued economic progress. If, on the other hand, rich *rentiers* spend sumptuously in order to keep the economic wheels turning, prosperity is given a content hard to defend on the basis of moral or social principles.

The question of who should finally bear the burden of the federal debt has not received the attention it deserves. Should debt-taxes be so distributed as to minimize their adverse effect on the level of income, or are we primarily concerned about equitable treatment of bondholders? Taxes designed as an anesthesia for the debt might logically absorb the interest-income of debtholders; but that would break faith with the legitimate expectations of bond purchasers. We should hardly be able, even if we wanted, to penalize the persons who supported the war bond drives, and reward those who were unwilling along with those who were unable to buy bonds. It may prove difficult, however, to tax workers, many of them war veterans, in order to pay interest to persons who bought bonds at a sacrifice that must sometimes have been comparatively trivial.

The respective claims of economy and equity will, in all likelihood, be compromised in the actual distribution of debt-taxes. There may be occasion for regret that we chose borrowing rather than higher taxes at a time when financial sacrifices were more willingly made. But that is water over the dam; the problem is to keep the dikes firm against flood and torrent.

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It used to be fashionable to compute the amount of debt per capita, or compare the size of the debt with the national wealth or the national income. While these comparisons are not irrelevant, they miss the main point. The managers of the nation's finances are much less concerned about the size of the debt than they are about the cost of servicing it. The fact that the burden of debt can be reduced as much by halving the interest rate as by retiring half of the principal is to many people a shocking thought. The phenomenal recent growth in the federal debt has obscured the fact that wartime borrowings were made at an average interest rate about one-third lower than the average interest charge on the federal debt in 1940. This represents an annual saving of close to one billion dollars in service on a debt of the size we have now—a substantial saving at a time when debt service amounts to about one-eighth of the federal budget.

If the source of debt burden—the interest rate—can thus be manipulated by the government, the question is sure to arise, Why not make our federal debt noninterest-bearing? Indeed, this very proposal has been made, particularly with reference to that part of the debt held by the

commercial banks; and these banks are, as a group, the largest single holder of the federal debt. To permit banks to collect interest upon money they create to finance federal expenditures is a questionable concession. The marriage of our money supply to the volume of debt instruments is, however, like many other marriages; although fraught with all sorts of incompatibilities, sufferance of the unhappy union may be better than divorce, especially when the issue is prolific. The price of divorce now would be the extinction and monetization of a considerable portion of the federal debt, with the attendant danger of runaway inflation.

Whatever savings in debt service resulted from lowering interest rates much below present levels would be more than offset by adverse effects on other parts of the economy. A reduction in interest rates close to zero would lead to a riotous boom in capital assets. Endowed institutions and other *rentiers* would have to readjust to a much lower level of income. These considerations are decisive in counselling against a general lowering of interest rates. There is some consolation in the possibility that we are in for a period of more and more segmentation of the market, of adjusting debt instruments to the needs of particular groups and institutions. There is a chance, for example, that special low-interest securities may partly replace the present holdings of the commercial banks, or that the Treasury may offer a special high-interest issue attractive and restricted to individuals. It may be possible by such measures to squeeze the bounty out of debt service without pulling down our capital structure.

As a going concern, the United States Treasury is constantly confronted with the problems and opportunities presented by a maturing debt. Through its refunding operations it may raise or lower interest rates, provide fixed or market values for its securities, modify the term of maturities and otherwise change the character of the federal debt. Although the state of the market must be considered in setting conversion terms, the Treasury itself is the most important single force in shaping this market. It is therefore in a position to adapt the composition and ownership of the debt to the requirements of prevailing economic conditions. In time of prosperity, for instance, it could substitute less liquid obligations for more liquid ones, or even retire part of the debt; impending depression, on the other hand, would call for the opposite kind of exchange. Similarly, it could encourage a shift in ownership of the debt

from banks to individuals when inflation threatened, and vice versa in a deflationary situation. Intelligent management of the debt rests, of course, upon flexibility in the level of the debt itself. A gratuitous commitment either to balance the budget or reduce the debt would hamstring economic policy and wise debt management alike.

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The danger of inflation is perhaps the main cause of concern about our federal debt. And oddly enough, the worry is not that the debt is burdensome, but that the burden will be reduced through a higher average price level. The reason for this anxiety is readily apparent.

Over the past few years popular participation in titles to relatively fixed shares of income has increased enormously. The climax of this trend may be seen in the 85 million persons estimated to have invested in war bonds. Having become a nation of creditors and of creditor-minded individuals, nearly every home is bound to feel the ill effects of higher prices. With the government the largest debtor, and in a position to call the tune, there is reasonably enough a widespread fear of inflation.

There is no warrant for this fear, however, in the financial history of the United States. The dollars in which the federal government has discharged its obligations have generally been dearer than those in which the debt was contracted. The continental currency in whose terms our Revolutionary War debt was contracted was certainly a cheaper currency than that in which the debt was paid. The same general story was repeated in our experiences after the Civil War and the first World War. This background of performance provides a large measure of assurance that the present debt will not be liquidated in a riotous price spiral.

The economic character of the federal debt no less than its political dimensions argues against a debt-inspired price spiral. The inflation label attached to the unparalleled volume of bank deposits and the readily redeemable bonds which evidence the federal debt has so far proved unwarranted. Indeed, the popular association of public debt with inflation, and of its retirement with deflation, is an oversimplification. A situation where debt retirement is actually more inflationary than debt maintenance is quite possible. The fact that the inflation potentialities of debt creation are greater than those involved in debt maintenance suggests that the danger peak may have already passed.

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Several dramatic ways of ridding ourselves of the federal debt have been proposed, and other and more hypnotic nostrums can be expected. As the debt recedes farther and farther into the past the halo that victory put around it may begin to look more like a noose. Taxes raised in behalf of a particular group, whose claim grows dim with the years, will become increasingly hard to justify. At a time also when fiscal policy has assumed a prominent role in the over-all management of the economy, it is unfortunate that its operation should be limited by the fairly inflexible burden of debt service. Yet, in our anxiety to reduce the debt burden, we must not yield to plausible pressures for repudiation.

Assuredly we should not be panicky about our large federal debt. Nor is there good reason to drown its burdens in ecstasy over its benefits. We need not pretend that we like, or that we have designed, that which is in large part the inevitable price of an unwanted war. The federal debt must be viewed and treated simply for what it is—a complicating element in our increasingly complex economy.

A STORY

AN OPEN WINDOW

By EDITH TARCOV

TODAY IS SPRING. We are in the early part of February but today is spring; yet the weather forecast this morning predicts snow for tomorrow, a snowstorm and another cold spell for the rest of the week. But today is spring. I run to the window. It is hard to push it up—it has been closed so long. And it is so dirty. Really, I shall have to clean it soon. The air is full of sun, brisk and quiet. The sun is almost warm and the sky is clear and wide again, almost blue. Spring mornings are made of this air; fresh, sunned air. All sounds are brisk and far off. There are few sounds and they all seem gentle yet vigorous. I put my arms outside the window on the cold stones of the house—how dirty they get—and I rest my head on my arms. There is quite a wind. I hadn't noticed a wind in the quiet sun air. If I close my eyes for a moment—just a moment—this is another spring morning; a morning of my childhood.

It is our old Waldheim house. Somebody beats the dust out of the featherbeds in the guest room in the lower story. I love the knocking sound of the straw rug-beater echoing in the feathers. I hear a cart in the street and a man's boots on the cobblestones; in the same rhythm, all the way down the street till I barely hear the melody: Bones Paper Old Iron. The sound is lost in a train whistle. A car passes evenly. Some feet in the lower story and the carpet cleaner's electric buzzing. Some pots in the kitchen.

But there are many spring mornings of many countries, many me's and many times. They all are alive now, merged, flickering in the air of this morning here now. The brisk spring is the same.

I had better go and look after my child; better start cleaning my dirty windows. Ah, today I am hopeful and filled with energy. I enjoy running back to my child. I laugh with her and we prepare soap-water to clean the windows, to scrub the whole of the winter dirt away. Until it snows again; thaws and rains. It is puzzling how pointless it all is. How we live and procreate ourselves. How we live to procreate. Pale and sadly pointless.

There is my child, whose little days are full of little joys and little tasks, of do's and dont's. Each of her days is so much like the one past and the one that follows. So pointless. Yet so full of enjoyment, so full of meaning and excitement. Earthly pained bodies pained to certain death. And new bodies coming to certain death. Yet we crave for life; to gain excitement, meaning, harmony. Our passions in our pained bodies flare high above them. I love the open window growing clean under my hands, shining now, full of mirrored sun and light air.

"Mami," my little girl says, "there, look, you broke a bowl. Will Papa be angry and sad with you when he comes home?" She's just three. How nicely she speaks English. It's a joy, such a complicated, strange language from my own child. And I speak it myself now and think and dream in it. Wondrous and strange, incomprehensible.

Why do I teach my child that Papa gets angry and sad? Do I know? I don't watch carefully, indeed. My child is my equal most of the time; I forget that I am to teach—we live together.

When I taught in the displaced children's home—the old orphanage —when I taught those children whose parents were far away in concentration camps and poor labor jobs, in dirty crowded quarters—or dead or insane—when I taught those sixty children I could not sleep at night because the responsibility pressed on me, stirred in me and made my heart beat harshly. Every moment of the day I was conscious of my high responsibility, so beyond my eighteen years, my inexperience. I was a frantic soul shouldering my duties, not ever feeling that I deserved such duties or the love of these precious strange children. And there was spring then, too. And I stuck my head out of my window and was hopeful and glad. Hopeful yet caught in my duties and in my fate. Would I ever be able to leave this cursed land? I would! Yet I could not believe that I would escape suffering a young horror death.

But it was spring. And then I was eighteen.

With my child I am not aware of my responsibilities and importance. And yet I know that I am insufficient. But we are equals. I know so little even though I know so much. And so does my child. When I teach my child I feel that I perform a necessary intrusion more than that I educate; I perform my responsibilities. And when I lose my patience, I despair because I fail her.

She is happy; she is well adjusted. Better adjusted than I. But I even hate talking about her in these terms. I live with her. We share a life. And yet each of us lives on her own; we know so little of each other above what we learn by our instincts.

Yes, it is nice to see the clean windows, a clean room. A clean, precious wonderful morning. We get ready to go to the park.

I am alive. I am living. I have survived the horror of the end of my very own life, the life of my very own tribe. My parents have been killed horribly. I know many details. Yet few enough to imagine them suffering many ends. There is no way out of it any more. I have the letter of the woman who knows. This is the end. Years, I have feared yet hoped. Hoped very little. I thought I was prepared. But now I know. I have had a letter. It was physical pain to face knowing.

But today is filled with spring air and I am full of hope and happiness. I should strike out that "but"; it is silly; it is superfluous and confusing.

I am fortunate. I am one of the fortunate ones.

Come, my child, come, Irina, let me put your snowsuit on. How I love to put clothes on your little body, caressingly. It is painful to think that you are not always happy now; to think that you might have to suffer. But live! Live. I love to caress your little face, love your caressing me. They say that you are an unusually happy and affectionate child. When your teacher told me I almost cried. I am grateful. I am glad of it —but I know better—it might not be true; and it might change. I am touched by your precious, clean youngness; your unspoiled child's soul. And yet I know I have desecrated it many times. . . . Yet you are strong.

"Mami, is me going outside?" She is full of wonder, pleasure and expectation.

"Yes, Irina."

"Look, so much sun in my eyes. I've got sun on my face!"

"Let's blink at the sun; like this." I make slits of my eyes and blink through my lashes at the multi-colored sunlight, rolling my head.

"That's fun, Mami." We blink at the sun for a while. She leans back in her stroller, holding up the blanket with her blue-mittened fists. She hums and then sings earnestly, over and over: "I blink with the sun. I blink with the su-un. I blink with the su-un."

I am fortunate. I have a lovely child. I have a good man who loves me dearly and well. We are happy. But what about my killed tribe. . . . This morning I know. The pain of knowing is still in the sun-soaked clean, spring air. Today life is of one weave. It is futile to live to procreate and it is glorious. It is glorious and meaningful to live and the mind's search for meaning and creation is exciting.

They found corpses all over the camp. The Belsen water cistern was poisoned with corpses.

The defense and prosecution of the trial in Lüneburg—*Auf der Lüneburger Heide, in dem schonen, grünen Wald,* we sang. Right at home. . . . The lawyers argued whether there were two or a dozen corpses in the poisoned cistern. And they shovel naked corpses all over the old continent. And my parents. My whole tribe.

"Yes, my sweet girl, there is sun in your eyes."

How wonderful this morning is! The park is so wintry yet. There ought to be buds on bushes and trees on a morning like this. But it's February. Corpses. They hanged them white on empty naked trees. They shot them. They starved them. They gassed them, beastly.

Can one die beastlike and still hold on to the knowledge, the faith of the meaningful life? Could they? God was there. Was He there?

"Going home already, Mami?"

"Yes, Irina, we're going home. We'll have to eat lunch and you'll nap."

"Is me going outside in the afternoon, Mami?"

"Yes, my pet."

* * *

It is quiet. Irina sleeps. I sit at the open window and hold my face into the sun. I want another child. A little boy-baby; or another little girl. I long for the feeling of pregnancy, of expectance. I would like a big stomach; the movements of a child; the clumsiness of myself. I would like to give birth again and yet feel frightened of labor; frightened and longing.

Children were thrown into fires and gas chambers. Children become men and women who might be thrown into fires and gas chambers. I know—yet I hate to see it. I look away from this knowledge—that our world is chaos. Always.

This morning I heard radio news about an Indian revolt, about the Argentine police shooting and torturing Peron's "enemies." I read a children's story that wants to convince its little readers to play occasionally with a Nice Negro child. Angry tears come into my eyes and rise now. The violence of the world moves around us in circles—closer and farther and farther and closer again. We have to build our lives well and meaningfully. We have to try and strain to partake in the world's life to create a particle of good. The ideal of the Messiah—in as many different forms as there are peoples—exists truly, above the chaos. Even order exists, and men can die peacefully. Yet let me die before my good man. It would be horrible to lose him, to survive him.

My mother must have felt like that. And yet her man died before her. Before her and horribly. And she waited for her own horror-end. "Your mother bore it bravely," the woman who knows wrote to me. "She was full of belief in God—*gottesfürchtig* in-fear-of-God—and so she could bear it." Their lives were hard and pointless. War, years at the western front. Lost comradeship, concentration camps, and gas chambers. Far from their children, their procreated future. In themselves they fulfilled their circle, reached human greatness and unity with God. The spirit that hovers above the waters, the voice that was heard in the wilderness.

How far away from this new continent are these things. Nightmares? My doubts and my cries. And yet trembling I know there can only be fulfillment within; without, we see pointless procreation and pointless pained bodies and pointless death toward which all things point. Without. Yet the spring air is without. When I close my eyes, rest my head on my arms in the sunned air of the open window, the warmth, the glorious sun-air hope comes to me from without. So comes my man, so is my child. What is without and what within? What is meaningful and what pointless? All is interwoven meaningfully and unknowably. And yet forever we crave to know, to define and create; our reality.

How I long to bear a child. Pregnancy with all its physical misery is so full of physical bliss. I shall bear a new child. My eyelids, my cheeks feel warm in the sun. Is it going to be spring now, in February, in spite of all weather forecasts?

I don't know if I am a good mother. I worry. I want my child to be happy, to be spared agony. The other morning a woman from some

agency inquired over the phone if we had a child in this household. I said yes. I gave name and age. Afterwards I was frantic. What does she want? To abduct my child? Nothing should happen to Irina. . . . Then I heard a terrible cry from the backstairs. I rushed to Irina. Her little hand was behind her back, her body bent in pain; she cried horribly. I rushed to her.

"Does your stomach hurt, Irina?"

"Nooo," she cried.

I take her hand from behind her back. Blood is running from her little hand. I open it gently. A razor blade lies in her hand in a mess of blood.

I moan deeply. I take the blade from her with my left hand and pick her up with my right, rush up the stairs to our apartment.

"Where did you get the razor blade?"

"YOU gave it to me, Mami!"

And I know. The blade must have been in the advertising letter I gave her this morning; I had overlooked it.

"Wash my hand!" I wash off the blood; there must be a horrible cut. And yet we are lucky. It could have been worse; she might have killed herself, slashed her stomach, her eyes. . . . But all there is, is the tiniest cut in her little forefinger; the tiniest cut. O God, I am grateful. And I wanted to protect her!

Little Irina. This is the first time you have seen blood flowing. I comfort her, hold her. And then she leaves off. She goes and plays, still holding a little piece of cotton on her finger.

That was yesterday.

On the wall of my room hangs a *Käthe Kollwitz*. I turn my head away from the street and look over my arm at the picture in the room. It is a smiling mother holding a gay child whose little arms clasp her neck. The little leg hangs down under the mother's arm. Skinny little leg, frail child, and frail mother poorly dressed. A sweet intimacy, a glowing happiness, yet dark poverty and sorrow are inherent in the picture. Kollwitz has done greater things. There is a woodcut of people dancing in the streets of Paris during the revolution, with glory—and with the guillotine. There are pictures of the peasant revolt and the weaver revolt, with hopeful and dying people, kindness and comradeship —and scythes lifted in women's and men's hands to kill. But this simple

picture I chose for my room. The great pictures of Kollwitz start out here, are inherent, simple.

But I turn my head back, face the sun again; it becomes a strain to look over my arm, I want to feel the sun on my closed lids. I want to listen to the clean noises outside, cleared and harmoniously strung, far off in the sun-filled clear spring air.

Today is spring yet the weather forecast predicts snow for tomorrow, a snowstorm and another cold spell for the rest of the week.

CONSTANCE ROURKE AND FOLK CRITICISM

By STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN

When Constance Rourke died in 1941 at the age of 56 she had only begun to find her direction. She had published six books and was at work on a monumental three-volume *History of American Culture,* for which all the other books were merely preliminary exploration. A few years before, in *Charles Sheeler,* she had hit on what will probably emerge as her chief contribution to contemporary criticism, a method of analyzing formal art in terms of its roots in folk tradition. At the same time she was engaged in finding, organizing, interpreting and popularizing an American folk tradition which would be available to future artists. Her work was thus both analytic and synthetic, and the two strands together constitute one of the most promising activities in American criticism, unfortunately carried on since her death by no one.

Her first book, *Trumpets of Jubilee,* published in 1927, is a study of five persons of wide popular appeal in America in the middle years of the last century: Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Ward Beecher, Horace Greeley, and P. T. Barnum. It is to some extent biography, to some extent social history, and to some extent, in the section on Mrs. Stowe, the only literary figure in the group, genuine criticism (including a shrewd analysis of why *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had a power none of her other novels achieved, and a very perceptive comparison with Hawthorne). Some of the social history gets down to underlying causal factors, but a good deal of it is simply a skimming of the surface, a reporting on vagaries of furniture and costume, and the folk material in the book—an interpolated fragment of "Old Dan Tucker," some fine tall tales—is of the latter order, a kind of superior local color. The book is least satisfactory in regard to the Beecher clan, since Miss Rourke never quite manages to define their appeal; most generally satisfactory is the Barnum section, a brilliant study of the man as a focus for an age's giantism; and perhaps most dramatically effective is the portrait of

Horace Greeley, a deeply moving story sharpened into tragedy by the only editorializing Miss Rourke permitted herself in the book, an ironic picture of the social pretensions of the Greeley children after their father's death. As a book it is rather a mixed performance, but all the strains of the later work are in it, struggling to break through the crust of traditional social history.

The next book, *Troupers of the Gold Coast,* published a year later, is Miss Rourke's least ambitious work. It is an undistinguished, pleasant, and superficial attempt to create the atmosphere of old-time theatrical trouping, and it has something of the tone of a scrapbook full of faded theatre programs, a button off Edwin Booth's jacket, and a garter worn by Adah Menken. It is not a book that anyone without golden childhood memories of Lotta Crabtree or Lola Montez would bother reading. The book has nothing that could fairly be called either social or cultural history, and of folk material only a dozen fragments of folk songs and popular songs of the period, and a few brief pages on the "characters" of early San Francisco: The Great Unknown, "George Washington," The Fat Boy, Guttersnipe, Rosie, two dogs named Bummer and Lazarus, and The Emperor Norton. It has no critical method, and in fact no criticism.

American Humor, subtitled "A Study of the National Character," appeared in 1931, an ambitious unraveling of one strand in the cultural history of the United States. The book divides American folk-related culture into a number of separate studies (frequently obtaining what Kenneth Burke calls "perspective by incongruity" through the use of shrewd juxtapositions): the Yankee and backwoodsman as American types; the minstrel show; trouping performers and religious cultists as two types of American "strollers"; Lincoln and the comic writers; the classic American writers; the Western humorists; James and Howells as facets of the American artist; contemporary writers through the '20's. The formal literary figures are treated as outgrowths of the folk culture, sometimes with a certain distortion—Hawthorne becomes a teller of folk tales, *Moby Dick,* with its comic Biblical names and nautical puns, a cousin to the joke books of the day—but sometimes the distortion is a brilliant restoration, like the recognition of Lincoln as a literary figure. Miss Rourke is constantly hovering on the verge of a deeper concept of folk culture, a matter of archetypal myth and ritual, which she learned

from Jane Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual* but never quite manages to apply. She notes that Mike Fink was "a Mississippi river-god, one of those minor deities whom men create in their own image and magnify to magnify themselves," and that Crockett "became a myth even in his own lifetime," and after his death assumed "an even bolder legendary stature than before." She sees the process, though, as essentially a euhemerizing one, a fairly civilized folk somehow "mythologizing" a historical character within a few years, instead of recognizing the dynamic development implicit in Miss Harrison's view, whereby historical characters with what might be called "myth-attracting" features acquire older mythic attributes and stories.

Miss Rourke notes that a "legendary assumption of wisdom" has "appeared persistently among American comic characters," but is unable to go on and interpret it as a complex transference from ancient oracles to Old Zip Coon (if not directly from an African prototype). She mentions "the primary stuffs of literature,"

> the theatre that lies behind the drama, the primitive religious ceremony that has been anterior to both, the tale that has preceded both the drama and the novel, the monologue that has been a rudimentary source for many forms.

She is able to recognize these ancient patterns underlying American pseudo-folk poetry, but the understanding of processes of the "folk work" like transmission, independent origin, accretion, continuity, and alteration that would have enabled her to define the relationship is beyond her. The closest she comes to it is a kind of negative (and somewhat erroneous) definition:

> As by a concerted impulse the American had cut himself off from the older traditions; the natural heritage of England and the continent had been cast away so far as a gesture could accomplish this fact. Perhaps the romanticism of the pioneer in relation to the Indian was part of that instinct by which new peoples attempt to enrich themselves from old; the Indian possessed established tribal unities which the American lacked. Even the American absorption of Negro lore may have been an effort in the same direction. But the Negro would offer only the faint and distorted reflection of a primal culture; and the quest for that of the Indian had been abortive.

What Miss Rourke manages to do in the book is define the "primitive base," consisting of "songs and primitive ballads and a folk-theater and rude chronicles," often "full of coarse and fragmentary elements, full of

grotesquerie or brutality," on which our literature, like any other, rests, and insist on that relationship as her central theme and concern:

> Through the interweaving of the popular strain with that of a new expression on other levels a literature has been produced which, like other literatures, is related to an anterior popular lore that must for lack of a better word be called folk-lore.

The conclusion of the book formulates the synthetic function: few artists have worked without a rich traditional store, the task of criticism is "discovering and diffusing the materials of the American tradition" in which the artist may steep himself.

Miss Rourke's next two books were attempts at diffusing that traditional store. The first was *Davy Crockett,* in 1934, and the second *Audubon* in 1936. The *Crockett* is Miss Rourke's only thorough failure. Written in the condescending popular style of a juvenile for teen-age readers, the book is a jumble of the real Crockett and the legend; a sequence of dramatized anecdotes, including Crockett's children speaking "tall talk" around the house, strung-together Crockett fables from the Almanacs, with little interest in the real man and his significance. The sort of thing Miss Rourke is reduced to is sneaking in Crockett's vote in defense of Biddle and the Bank, buried in a sentence about something else with no attempt made to explain it. *Davy Crockett* is unscholarly, unanalytic, "folksy" in the worse sense of the word, and generally an unreadable and poor book. *Audubon* two years later somewhat redeemed the record. Although straight biography with no attempt at criticism or analysis, the book is at least, unlike the *Crockett,* interesting and well written, and Miss Rourke confined her gullibility to accepting as a strong possibility the legend that Audubon was the little lost Dauphin, and telling an extremely dubious aetiological myth of his inventing the combination of pastel and water-color technique he used by a lucky movie accident one day. Both books made available to American writers aspects of American frontier tradition, the pioneering man of action and the pioneering artist, but unfortunately made them available in a form any serious writer could be pardoned for ignoring.

Constance Rourke's first book of genuine folk criticism was *Charles Sheeler,* published in 1938. In Sheeler she found a serious artist (although not so good a one as she believed) who had discovered an American folk tradition for himself, the functional form of the Shaker artisans, and who

had consciously grounded his work in it, to the work's great benefit. Looking at Sheeler's paintings and photographs (many of them reproduced as evidence in the book) she discovered the basic principle that had eluded previous popularizers of the folk tradition, that a tradition is not in subject but in *form,* that the secret does not lie in painting a hillbilly building a silo, but in painting *as* a hillbilly builds a silo. (This was the key realization that helped her to such later insights as that the writers who said we had no native theatrical tradition were wrong. They hadn't known where to look. She looked in the public ceremonial of the Indian treaty, in the dialectic play of the Calvinist sermon, and found it.) On the strength of this discovery in Sheeler, she affirmed her principles with a new certainty. "Possibly our soil has not been too shallow for a full creative expression," she wrote; and she showed Sheeler studying architectural and handicraft form in Bucks County, discovering Shaker buildings and furniture and the Shaker motto, "Every force has its form," and finally emerging as a "pathfinder in the use of American traditions in art," American without being provincial, modern and still rooted in the past, responsive at once to Shaker barns and primitive Negro sculpture.

A further level of abstraction, that would have found the formal relation between Shaker barns and African sculpture, was beyond Miss Rourke's power. She was always on the verge of relating her American material to the great stream of world folk culture (she noted without further explanation that behind a graveyard tall story in *Life on the Mississippi* is the Osiris myth, that the legends of Crockett's birth are taken over from Hercules, his fire-bringing from Prometheus, his silver bullet from the Scandinavian, other features from Celtic and American Indian lore) but she lacked the background, the learning, perhaps the imagination, to do that job successfully. What she settled for was the narrower ambition of creating a specifically American and democratic folk tradition to oppose the sophisticated and undemocratic European formal tradition defined by men like Eliot. She explained the difficulty of the job:

> We sometimes seem to be hunting for a tradition . . . but traditions are often hard to discover, requiring a long and equable scrutiny; they are hard to build, consuming an expanse of time which may pass beyond a few generations.

Even a few more years of life might have enabled her to do a good part of that building.

II

The Roots of American Culture, Constance Rourke's last book, was published posthumously in 1942, and consisted of brief sections from the manuscript of her *History of American Culture,* several of which had previously appeared in magazines, salvaged and edited with a preface by Van Wyck Brooks. The material is very fragmentary: an essay on "The Roots of American Culture," a long study of early American theatricals, a piece on early American music, one on the Shakers, a "note" on folklore, a study of an obscure naturalistic artist named Voltaire Combe, a survey of the extent of genuine Negro folk culture in the minstrel shows, and a piece on a possible future direction for American painting. The art and music criticism, by dealing with the relatively obscure, avoids the necessity of having to be technical with a relatively untrained eye and ear, but the theatrical study reveals a real sense of the theatre.

By far the best essay, and one that shows most fully her developed critical method, is the short piece on the minstrel shows called "Traditions for a Negro Literature." Against the opposition of writers like S. Foster Damon, who claimed that no legitimate Negro material exists in the minstrel show (and the presumable opposition of the George Pullen Jackson, Guy Johnson, Newman Ivey White school, who claim that no Negro art exists anyway not stolen from white art) Miss Rourke opposed fact. She demonstrated that all the classic white minstrel compositions were borrowings: that Dan Emmett's "Old Dan Tucker" was either Negro-derived or wholly of Negro origin, with a Negro-type tune, a Negro shouting choral effect, and a content of cryptic Negro animal fables about the jaybird and the bulldog; that "Turkey in the Straw" is certainly a Negro dance song; that "Dixie" begins with a characteristically Negro Biblical legend; that Dan Rice's "Clar de Kitchen" is an animal fable in which the Negro triumphs, and so on. She further showed that the ritual forms and conventions of the minstrel show, its dance routines, its cries, in addition to its musical and anecdotal material, were all Negro or Negro-derived. Having performed that analytic job, using the first part of her method, the tracing of formal art to its folk roots, Miss Rourke went on to do the synthetic half of the job, the organization of a folk tradition for

artists to use, by showing that much of the Negro material preserved in a distorted and offensive form in the minstrel shows has been preserved nowhere else, and that it could be lifted from the minstrel setting, cleaned and refurbished, to furnish a vital tradition for American Negro literature. (Miss Rourke does not make use of, or perhaps was not familiar with, one of the best illustrations of her case, the minstrel song "De Blue-Tail Fly," which under the cheap minstrel dialect is a serious and very fine song of slave protest and rebellion.)

Because of the specialized nature of her subject, Miss Rourke did not take up what is probably the basic question about American Negro folk material, its complicated relationship to primitive African myth and ritual, and by extension the basic problem of her field, the general relationship of art to rite. In another part of the book, however, the section, "The Indian Background" in the long essay "The Rise of American Theatricals," Miss Rourke found the problem precisely at the heart of her topic, and manages in a few pages to be remarkably suggestive. She claims that the Indian treaties are the earliest American drama, and one of the sources, along with the European tradition, of later American drama. She describes their nature:

> These treaties were essentially plays—chronicle plays—recording what was said in the parleys, including bits of actions, the exchange of gifts, of wampum, the smoking of pipes, the many ceremonials with dances, cries and choral songs. Even the printed form of the treaties was dramatic: the participants were listed like a cast of characters, and precise notations were made as to ceremonial action. Symbolic phrases were used to seal promises, even to raise questions.

Not only were the treaties drama, but like the Greek dramas they were based on the patterns of primitive ritual. The Iroquois treaties used traditional forms from the Iroquois book of rites, and all the ceremonial arrangements were based on "deeply rooted communal experience." The fifty Indian treaties known to have been printed, Miss Rourke points out, form a cycle with "epic proportions as well as an epic theme," and are "poetry of a high order." These are not only our first plays, she insists, but also inevitably our best early plays:

> That the treaties could be matched in poetic or imaginative values by individual effort in their own time was hardly to be expected; they were traditional, communal, they expressed values that had long been accumulated.

Here she is very close to the same discovery about which she hovered in *American Humor:* that the important relationship of art literature to folk literature lies, not in the surface texture of folk speech, but in the archetypal patterns of primitive ritual, the great myths. Again, in "A Note on Folklore" in the book, she recognizes that something basic is lacking in her subject, the use by American writers of folk material, that it tends to be a "placing of quaint bits end to end," but she fails to perceive what it is that is lacking, and the piece falls off into inconsequence.

The thing Miss Rourke *did* discover in the book, a basic critical concept continuing her discovery in *Charles Sheeler* that a tradition lies not in content but in form, is her recognition that the American folk tradition is not primarily naturalistic but abstract: the abstraction of a Jonathan Edwards sermon, a Navajo blanket, a John Henry feat, and a Vermont hooked rug; and that it is Marin who is painting in it, not Norman Rockwell. A number of other fragmentary elements of promise are buried in the book: a recognition (borrowed from Ruth Benedict) of the importance of *Gestalt* "configurations" in studying cultures; a plan for the serious teaching of American folk literature in the colleges; a study of how a people like the Shakers can acquire something like the communality of a "folk" in one generation; but they were promises she did not live to fulfill.

III

In her last two books Constance Rourke left the field of folk collecting and retelling and entered the tradition of serious folk criticism. Folk criticism is not, like a number of types of contemporary criticism, a single method, but rather a number of possible approaches having in common a body of material. Miss Rourke's school is that of Herder, and she gives an excellent one-sided tracing of it as an aspect of the Romantic Movement in her essay "The Roots of American Culture": beginning with Montaigne's theory of *poésie populaire,* or primitive song springing from idyllic communal life; going through Vico's folk-wisdom of the primitive; continued in Rousseau's Natural Man; fully developed in Herder's theory of the folk arts as the basis and shaping force of the fine arts in form, spirit, and expression; and going to seed in the "antiquarianism" of Schlegel and the Grimms. (The other side of the Vico-Herder tradition, its flowering in Nazi *Kultur,* Miss Rourke ignores.)

A much more important tradition of folk criticism, of which Miss Rourke seems hardly to have been aware, is the English anthropological school of the nineteenth century, beginning with Sir E. B. Tylor and Sir James G. Frazer, and continued by Andrew Lang, E. S. Hartland, A. E. Crawley, and others. Although all were men of enormous reading, and Frazer and Lang were first-rate classical scholars in addition, their chief work lay in studying, not literature, but the patterns of primitive behavior on which our literature is based. There is space here to note only a few of their many books. Tylor in his chief work, *Primitive Culture,* studied the evolutionary process whereby cultural factors transcend their function, from the witch doctor's rattle in the baby's hand to the survival of animism in philosophy; Frazer's monumental twelve-volume *Golden Bough,* as well as his other books, are poetically-organized compendious collections of lore, beliefs and customs underlying almost every aspect of our culture; Lang covered almost the entire breadth of the field, from Australian totemism to Homer and fairy tales; Hartland studied primitive myth and belief in his great works *Primitive Paternity* and *The Legend of Perseus;* Crawley, in *The Mystic Rose, The Tree of Life,* and *The Idea of the Soul,* dealt respectively with primitive origins of marriage, religion, and a philosophic idea.

Their work has been continued, chiefly in the field of classical studies, by what is known as "the Cambridge School," (although Professor Gilbert Murray of Oxford is probably its leading spirit, and other Oxford scholars like Tylor and Lang have greatly influenced it) consisting of Murray, F. M. Cornford, A. B. Cook, and Jane Harrison. All of the group, in books that overlap and supplement each other, has dealt with the ritual base behind Greek art, drama, epic, religion, and philosophy: Murray has shown the ritual conflicts underlying the form of Greek tragedy and the stories of Homer; Cornford did a similar analysis of Greek comedy and traced Greek philosophy from its beginnings in religious ritual; Cook studied the Greek god-king exhaustively as a ritual figure; and Miss Harrison, in a series of books going back as far as 1882, traced an underlying pattern of ritual conflict through almost every aspect of Greek art and religion.

Of the four, Jane Harrison is perhaps most important to mention in connection with Constance Rourke, both because she is the only one with whose work Miss Rourke seems to have been familiar (she quotes her

once in *American Humor*) and because she is an excellent example of the sort of work Miss Rourke might have done with another background and a great deal more learning. Miss Harrison's most important book is *Themis,* a tremendously valuable study of "the social origins of Greek religion" as it is reflected in drama, poetry, visual art, and even the Olympic Games, a product of both enormous learning and creative imagination. Her other well-known book, *Ancient Art and Ritual,* is a short popularly-written summary of the position of the group on the relationship between primitive Greek fertility rites and such highly sophisticated productions as drama and sculpture. Both books, like Miss Rourke's, analyze art forms in terms of their folk roots, and document a living popular tradition on which the artist bases himself, but Miss Harrison's recognition of ritual as central (in Kenneth Burke's phrasing, "ritual drama as the hub") as well as her greater learning and the richer field she has chosen to harvest, have made her books basic to folk criticism, rather than, like Miss Rourke's, merely peripheral and suggestive.

Of solitary workers along similar lines, Jessie Weston and Lord Raglan are probably the most important. Miss Weston, a scholar in the field of medieval romance, particularly the Arthurian cycle, came under the influence of Frazer, Murray, and Miss Harrison fairly late in her career, and decided to try applying their ritual view to the origins of romance. *From Ritual to Romance,* a greatly influential book on which T. S. Eliot based *The Waste Land,* is a witness to the success with which she made the Grail legend finally intelligible in terms of its genesis in a fertility cult. Lord Raglan, a rather crusty and independent English baron, has written two books dealing with folk lore, *Jocasta's Crime* and *The Hero. Jocasta's Crime* is a study of the incest taboo, invaluable in its general picture and its destruction of other theories, but rather absurd in the theory Raglan himself finally posits. *The Hero,* one of the most important and little-appreciated books of our time, is a study of traditional heroes and religious figures in the cultures of various peoples—Robin Hood, Siegfried, Arthur, Cuchulainn, Oedipus, Romulus, Moses (although Raglan avoids Christ, who obviously falls into his pattern)—as one archetypal hero, never historical, but always derived through a myth from a ritual drama. The method is Galton's, fixing an archetypal hero through twenty-two key points and checking each figure against them. (Earlier writers, among them Alfred Nutt, in *The Legends of the Holy Grail,* and

Otto Rank, in *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero,* had done part of the job before without the same success.) It is a cheeky, snobbish, and frequently irritating book, but its general contentions are so sound, so unquestionable, and so revolutionary (although implicit in the Frazer-Harrison-Weston line) that, more widely read, it could single-handedly end a good deal of the nonsense that currently passes for folk criticism.

A somewhat comparable tracing of underlying ritual patterns, but with a heavily mystic emphasis, has been turned on Shakespeare by Colin Still, in *Shakespeare's Mystery Play; A Study of the Tempest* and its later extension, *The Timeless Theme,* and continued, following Still's lead, by G. Wilson Knight in his first work, *Myth and Miracle.* The most recent inheritor of the method is George Thomson (a Greek professor and former Cambridge fellow) who has combined it with Marxism to produce a remarkable book, *Aeschylus and Athens,* subtitled "A Study in the Social Origins of Drama." In addition to drawing heavily on all the Cambridge people, Thomson utilizes a more scientific field anthropology of the type represented by Malinowski and Bateson. His greatest influence, however, is Caudwell's Marxist *Illusion and Reality* (also, incidentally, somewhat influenced by the ritual theory) and although he constantly reads Aeschylus and Greek drama in terms of ritual origins (with touches of Euhemerism), his emphasis is on ritual origins themselves as an aspect of productive labor, with the chief function of magic or incantation that of making the crops grow.

All the above are British scholars and critics, and there has been little comparable in America. Perhaps the most exciting folk method in this country is that of William Troy, a fully developed literary criticism working from a basis of myth and ritual, but since the dozen or so articles and reviews in which he has developed his ideas have never been collected in book form, his work has had nothing like the recognition it deserves. He has analysed a Zola novel in terms of the basic mythic pattern of Orpheus and Eurydice; interpreted Lawrence against the pattern of his chosen role as the Dying God or Sacrificial King; read Mann's works in terms of a number of basic myths and rites, from the initiation ritual underlying "Death in Venice" to the advanced social myth of the Joseph novels; seen Stendhal's heroes as scapegoats and his works as the ritual sequence of Greek tragedy; read some of Henry James's novels in terms of the Eden myth; identified Fitzgerald's Gatsby with the Grail heroes

and Stahr with Icarus; and been more successful than any other contemporary critic (if Joyce's own testimony means anything) in placing the patterns of myth and ritual underlying Joyce's work and analyzing their significance. Although he calls his method "Mythic" and relies particularly on Frazer for the archetypal patterns he finds at the heart of literary meaning, Troy also draws heavily on both Marx and Freud (as well as on such relatively abstruse matters as field physics). His method is generally so consistently pluralist it might better be called "Dantean" (Troy being perhaps the only modern critic to insist on the need for reviving Dante's medieval concept of the four levels of meaning). Under whatever name, it seems to be the closest thing in America, on a smaller scale, to the triumphs of the Cambridge group in England.

Francis Fergusson, who has been the only important American critic centrally concerned with the drama, has consistently read it in terms of the ancient sacrificial pattern exemplified in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. He has attempted to read poets and novelists like Dante, James, and Lawrence in the same fashion in a number of periodical pieces, like Troy's, not yet collected in book form. Aside from Fergusson and Troy, there has been little serious attempt in America at a folk criticism of art literature. Randall Jarrell has been heavily influenced by myth and ritual in his poetry, but his excellent criticism has used them only sporadically. Joseph Campbell, a scholar and critic of folk literature and mythology, has applied his material with some success (as well as some reductive simplifications) to that twentieth-century touchstone, *Finnegans Wake,* in the *Skeleton Key* he wrote in collaboration with Henry Morton Robinson. His work in this direction is handicapped, however, by a slighting of ritual factors that tends to break the ties of myth to the real earth and send it floating off into the thin air of metaphysics, comparative theology, or worse. Mary Austin, finally, in several books, worked profitably in an area all her own, the relationship between the forms and rhythms of American Indian poetry and those of modern American verse.

Far more numerous than the folk critics are the collectors, a group frequently scholarly but rarely critical. The list of men from the days of Bishop Percy (if not from the days of Herodotus and Ovid) to the present, and the types of work they have done, is endless, and fortunately does not lie within our province here, but it must be noted that one of the reasons for the thinness of Constance Rourke's work in comparison

to that of comparable figures in England is the poor quality of American collecting, which is now largely in the hands of men of little learning or imaginative breadth. The gap between Professor Francis James Child, the learned and polylingual scholar who organized the study of the ancient ballad, and a man like John Lomax, the current dean of American folk-song collectors, represents a steady deterioration of personnel in the field over the past half century.

Miss Rourke goes out of her way in her "Note on Folklore" in *The Roots of American Culture* to praise the work of such men as Lloyd Lewis, George Pullen Jackson, Roark Bradford, and B. A. Botkin in American folk study, but her list exposes the poverty of the field. Lewis is a journalist whose *Myths After Lincoln* is the embryo of the book someone could have written who knew more about the subject than can be obtained from a quick reading of the one-volume condensation of *The Golden Bough;* Jackson is a southern white chauvinist who has tricked out with trappings of pseudo-musicology his conviction that the Negro, as an inferior human, could hardly produce a first-rate art like the spirituals; Bradford's achievement was watering down the magnificent John Henry legend in his book of that name until it had the consistency of sugar water taken for a hiccup; and Botkin, easily the best of the lot, has been seduced away from genuine folk material by an interest in the texture of folk speech, the anecdotal or picturesque, what he calls "folk-say," to the point where his *Treasury of American Folklore* is an absolutely indiscriminating jumble of everything from first-rate Child ballad texts to long dull stretches of *The Congressional Record.* Most current American study has been preoccupied either with the aimless collection of folk songs, children's rhymes, etc., without any comprehension of their significance or ability to sort them out, or with the retelling of such phony legends as the Paul Bunyan material for an audience on the juvenile level (or even, as in the case of Paul Beath, the cool manufacture of a legendary hero, Febold Feboldson, of one's own, and the attempt to treat him as traditional).

Besides the one of simple devotion to inanity, there are two other and more serious dangers in the folklore position, both of which Miss Rourke had the good sense to avoid. At one extreme is the "folksy," drawing on the folk for cuteness or using the presumed pastoral virtues of some primitive performance as a club with which to beat formal art. The

classic example of this is the incredible passage in Tolstoy's *What is Art* where he expresses his preference for the Vogul pantomime deer hunt ("a true work of art") to *Hamlet* ("a false imitation of a work of art"). At the other extreme is the Nazi "volkisch," the blood-and-soil mysticism of irrationality, best represented in reputable literature by D. H. Lawrence's cult of the primitive, with its insistence on "blood-thinking" and the mystic "knowing" of peasants, Indians, and miscellaneous savages. Miss Rourke has made it clear that she is aware of the dangers of the first in her suggested contrast between Grant Wood's phony use of folksy subject matter and Sheeler's serious use of a folk formal tradition, and although she has never been explicit about the second (particularly in relation to Herder) she has attacked embryonic forms of it in terms of social "regression."

Another type of criticism closely related to folk criticism is cultural history, which deals with folklore and myth in the other sense of the words, the sense of Thurman Arnold's *Folklore of Capitalism,* as fallacious popular beliefs, which it tends to "debunk." Vernon L. Parrington, one of our few serious cultural historians of importance, furnishes an interesting contrast in method to Constance Rourke on Crockett. While she is chiefly interested in the charm of the legends themselves, and anxious to deny any evidence she thinks might detract from them, his effort is to place the Crockett legends in terms of political genesis and function. In a withering analysis in *Main Currents of American Thought,* he strips the legendary hero down to the real Crockett: a rather pathetic figure, ignorant, boastful, and ambitious; built up as an American symbol by skilled Whig publicists who wanted a coonskin hero to oppose to Jackson; used by the Whigs as long as he was usable; and then when his backwoods constituents repudiated his voting record of uninterrupted support for eastern banking interests, tossed aside by his Whig friends. Parrington shows how the legend was built step by step, conjectures shrewdly as to who ghosted each of the books, shows the constant anti-Jackson propaganda smuggled into their comedy, and at the end shows Crockett, like so many mythologized real heroes, coming to believe the legends himself.

Miss Rourke simply affirms, against the weight of the evidence, that Crockett created the legend himself by his character and racy talk, although the Whigs "probably added momentum to his fame"; that he wrote all or nearly all of the books himself, and that he was an honest

democratic figure who honestly opposed Jackson in his constituents' interest. What a more reasoned view than Miss Rourke's would have done was accept Parrington's account of the political genesis of Crockett as folk hero, and then go on to study the way in which this artificial figure later became genuine folk legend, or at least folk-transmitted legend, in the *Crockett Almanacs* after Crockett's death (which Parrington apparently either didn't know or didn't care about, and in which, as Miss Rourke rightly says, "few traces of a political bias appear").

A lowbrow form of American cultural history is the running picture of the American folk mind that H. L. Mencken furnished in his series of *Prejudices* and a number of other books (in which the popularity of Brieux and paper-bag cookery are equally important cultural phenomena of the '20's) and Thomas Beer in his *Mauve Decade* and the studies of Mark Hanna and Stephen Crane. A very specialized and useful type of it is the area Malcolm Cowley has staked out for himself, the cultural climate of writers, in *Exile's Return* and his *New Republic* pieces: elaborate Menckenian lists of books people were reading any given year, samples of what writers were thinking about and talking about, discussions of the effects events like the suicides of Hart Crane and Harry Crosby and the depression had on a literary generation.

IV

A few other aspects of Constance Rourke's work need discussion. One is a curious conflict, a division of focus, between the titles and the subtitles of her earlier works. *Troupers of the Gold Coast* is subtitled "or the Rise of Lotta Crabtree," and the actual book is a good deal less than the first and a good deal more than the second. *American Humor* is subtitled "A Study of the American Character," and fits the subtitle a good deal better than the title, since little of it has anything to do with humor (except in the other, or Jonsonian sense of "humor"; if the title is an unconscious pun it is beautifully applicable, although perhaps *The American Humor* or *American Humors* would be more grammatical). Only with *Charles Sheeler,* subtitled "Artist in the American Tradition," do Miss Rourke's titles and subtitles stop working at cross-purposes and finally get together, just as that was the first book in which she found a valid relationship between the individual artist and the larger American picture.

Miss Rourke's work was unquestionably limited. She lacked Jane Harrison's learning and her focus on the ritual drama as hub; Raglan's familiarity with the breadth of the material; the pluralism and integrative ability of Thomson and Troy; the familiarity with a relatively primitive people, or true "folk," of Mary Austin; even Parrington's basic tough-mindedness. She began with every handicap: a concept of folklore as local color and sentimental theatrical memories; an unexplored field in the hands of ignoramuses specializing in the guitar and the ten-gallon hat; a country whose true folk tradition lacks all homogeneity, consisting of Indian and Negro survivals and European imports, all modified beyond recognition to fit their new contexts. Despite all these handicaps, her work represents a steady development toward more and more significant criticism: discovering her analytic and synthetic functions in *American Humor,* as well as the relationship between folk and art literature; synthesizing a tradition of folksy content in *Crockett* and *Audubon;* discovering that a tradition lies in form rather than content in *Sheeler,* and that her true method was the folk analysis of formal art; realizing that the American folk tradition is abstract and has basic ritual elements in her unfinished *History of American Culture,* and on that basis doing her most significant jobs of analysis (the Indian roots of American drama) and synthesis (the minstrel tradition reconstructed for a Negro literature).

Miss Rourke's relationship to Van Wyck Brooks may be worth mention. The only book of his she has ever quoted specifically is *The Pilgrimage of Henry James,* in her James chapter in *American Humor,* and that to accept some of its incidental judgments and demolish its basic conclusion, that James broke with the American tradition by concentrating on the international scene rather than the meal in the firkin. She had attacked Brooks by indirection in her discussion of Twain in *American Humor* ("It is a mistake to look for the social critic—even *manqué*—in Mark Twain"), and attacked his manifestoes in *The Freeman* at some length in *Charles Sheeler* for calling for the mechanical creation of a hierarchial school of American artists, rather than the free use of American materials arising out of concrete needs and situations. Even *The Roots of American Culture,* which Brooks assembled and introduced with a respectful and proprietary preface, contains in the title essay a sharp attack on Brooks's central position (although Brooks is not named), what De Voto has tagged "the literary fallacy," when she writes: "The

governing idea that ours is a literary culture, or any similar preconception, may throw our judgments awry." Brooks, on the other hand, has unquestionably learned from her. It is probable that the much-commented-on statement in the first version of *The Ordeal of Mark Twain,* that America has no folk art of its own, disappeared after he became acquainted with Miss Rourke's works and, by way of recompense, the latest volume of the literary history, *The World of Washington Irving,* contains great gobs of folk material, some of it lifted directly from Rourke's books, none of it credited.

Much of Constance Rourke's special approach and significance is typified by the basic quarrel with Brooks over Henry James. As one endeavoring to create a valid and usable American tradition, she felt it absurd to throw James to the enemy, and she worked passionately to renaturalize him. The point of her James chapter in *American Humor* is that James is, as Howells said, basically and fundamentally in the American tradition, never more so than when he lived abroad and concerned himself with the international scene. She was, in the last analysis, not only the isolater of folk sources and roots in formal art, the synthesizer of a living folk tradition for other artists to come, the educator of provincial critics like Van Wyck Brooks, the popularizer of obscure and misapprehended figures and cultural phenomena in our past—Audubon, Voltaire Combe, the minstrel show, Horace Greeley; she was also a democrat and a patriot, in a deeper and better-informed sense than the ranters and the book-burners. Her own folk roots were substantial. Had she lived, she would have helped the American folk and the individual artists it has formed and inspired to earn their places in the cultural history of the world. She knew the secret that the true artist has two homes: his native land and the globe.

THE CHARACTER OF MODERN CRITICISM

By CHARLES I. GLICKSBERG

THE CRITICS still labor under the handicap that they are looked upon as no more than mediators between writers and the public. Fundamentally the charge against them is that they are merely interpreters and appraisers of books. They analyze and evaluate literary trends, past and present; hence they are not a generative force. It is, therefore, presumptuous on their part to belabor writers for this or that fault when at bottom they are dependent for their existence on the work that writers produce. The result of such an unfavorable estimate has been a virtual sabotage of literary criticism. Few people bother to read it. Critics, as a consequence, are forced to keep their own company. In some cases, they support each other professionally by developing what H. L. Mencken ironically calls a criticism of criticism of criticism.

Unfortunately, the public has tended to accept this judgment at face value, even though, as a rule, it is based on ignorance or prejudice or hearsay. True enough, writers are frequently justified in their protests against the malevolent stupidity and arrogance of critics who make up in condescension and assumed omniscience what they lack in insight and good taste. Notorious are the mistakes that critics have made in the past. Some of these flagrant errors of critical judgment have recently been documented by Henri Peyre in *Writers and Their Critics*, which makes entertaining and even astonishing reading, but this should not blind us to the fact that other perspectives are possible. A more rewarding book could be written indicating the far-sighted vision and courageous understanding of critics who championed a writer at a time when it was unpopular to do so. The support Whitman and James Joyce and T. S. Eliot received at the start of their careers from intrepid critics is as heartening a literary phenomenon as the asinine blunders of the dogmatists who refused to depart from the broad path of precedent and tradition.

All sorts of reasons can be adduced why critics blundered so badly in judging their contemporaries. They may have been swayed by political partisanship; they may have been led astray by moral canons applied to literature; they may have followed standards that were restrictive and aesthetically irrelevant. The critical mistakes of the past, however, illustrate one important fact, namely, that a critical judgment is an act in time. The mind of the critic must be judged in relation to the cultural conditions of his own age. It is more revealing to understand why Shelley and Whitman and Keats and Melville were not assessed at their true worth than to assail the blindness and bigotry of the critics who failed to appreciate their singular merit. The assumption that posterity is the court of last resort dispensing justice with an equal hand, is without foundation. Posterity is a myth. It is only a new and equally fallible incarnation of contemporaneity, exhibiting all its cocksureness, astigmatism, and intolerance. Taste is fluctuating and erratic; it does not follow a straight and continuous line of evolution. There are no fixed landmarks in the realm of criticism. The critic cannot, despite Matthew Arnold's contention, hit upon a touchstone for recognizing the elusive quality of greatness. What he confidently regards as the true mark of greatness often turns out to be nothing more than a generalization based on qualities achieved by the master spirits of the past. Hence it follows that critics cannot afford to be dogmatic in passing judgment. Just as no one can step twice into the same river, so no critic ever reads the same book twice. Criticism is a venture into the unknown, a wrestling with a nameless angel in the night. As Henri Peyre describes it, it is essentially an act of faith. Much as the critic may depend on his rich background of reading in various literatures and on tested methods of analysis, he cannot divest himself of his personality, even though he tries to guard against it.

What, then, are the distinctive functions of the critic? First of all, as an interpreter of literature he must endeavor to situate each work he discusses within a determinate cultural context. No book, whether published in the past or present, can be properly understood and evaluated without reference to the complex of conditions that exist at the time of its birth. Each age has its own social and psychological tensions. Each age is intensely preoccupied with a number of interests, truths, and values, which it regards as primary. It is the task of the critic, before considering

a work of art as an organic unity, to relate it to the socio-economic and cultural conditions out of which it arose.

There is serious danger, however, of going wrong if the cultural background is treated as a determining force on the creative mind. When we speak of what an age thinks or believes, we are, of course, exploiting an heuristic abstraction. The limitations of discourse make the use of such shorthand fictions inevitable. The judicious critic, in handling such fictions, is all the time aware that no age is uniform in its impulses, aspirations, and ideas. There are conflicts, internal strains and schisms, as the result of which certain dominant tendencies make themselves felt. Movements spring up; ideals of art and conduct are ardently embraced; any sign of heresy is instantly attacked or suppressed. Out of these mixed sources of intellectual energy there finally emerges an ideology, the outlines of which become more sharply defined the further we recede from it in time. Such relativistic insight into cultural conflict and mutation makes possible the correction of the categorical summing-up of any age. The eighteenth century, as Carl Becker points out in *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*, was an age of sensibility as well as rationalism.

Each age must formulate its own set of workable definitions, forge its own critical terminology. The dominant motifs of this age, for example, are science, technology, and industrialism. Scientific inventions have greatly facilitated the means of communication and transportation. As a result there is, as compared to the past, an extraordinarily widened area of consciousness and of knowledge. This has meant, for the writer as well as his public, a marked intensification of intellectualism. Cerebration has become an art and dialectics a profession. Psychoanalysis, symbolic logic, semantics, the philosophy of science have led thinkers to concentrate attention not only on the basic problems of inquiry but also on the emotional forces which condition thought, the role of the unconscious and how it influences reasoning and the creative process.

The writer is not only shaped by his culture. By virtue of his contributions he may also change its course of development. In structural organization and method of expression, modern poetry breaks sharply with past traditions, and this deviation is as marked as the lines of continuity. Shocked by a world given over to periodic wars and terrified by the menace of the atomic bomb, many of the poets today are literally unable

to make any forthright affirmations. Born in a painful "transition" period, they grope self-consciously for the perception, the thought, the flash of inspiration, that will bring some semblance of order into this hopelessly chaotic world. Machiavellianism in politics, relativism, the impact of scientific thinking on religious beliefs, the declining influence of *belles lettres* on modern life, the discoveries of Freud, the eccentric experiments of the Surrealists, the split personality—all these are jumbled together in poetry that moves in all directions at once.

Contemporary criticism reflects this spirit of indecisiveness, if not of doom. If criteria of judgment are relative, then talk of socio-economic conditioning, like the old theories about the "Zeitgeist," must be taken with considerable caution. How do we know that it is the spirit of the age or the material conditions of production which make themselves felt in the gestation and development of a work of art? It is questionable, as Levin L. Schücking demonstrates in *The Sociology of Literary Taste,* whether art really reflects the spirit of an age. For that "spirit," whether literary or Marxist, is a fiction. In each age there is a legion of contending "spirits." While it is important to examine the sociological roots and relations of literature, it is also obvious that many variables influence the fortunes of a work of art and that there is no final arbiter of permanent value.

Though the social and historical setting of an age should, when relevant, be brought into consideration, the work of art has a formal unity and importance on its own account. This aesthetic unity, this intrinsic importance, should not be superseded by sociological criteria. Every critical perspective is "good" to the extent that it illuminates the work in question and makes it possible for the common reader to enjoy it and understand it more fully. From this point of view, the formalists are correct in their prescriptive critical method, even if the political conclusions they draw are "reactionary." The work as art must be studied technically to exhibit its organizational effectiveness, the secret of its appeal, the meaning and function of its component parts in contributing to the total effect. To the elucidation of technical difficulties that stand in the way of comprehension, and therefore of proper appreciation, the formal critics have contributed more than all the psychological critics of recent years. Genetic influences, as in the case of Shelley and Wordsworth and Poe, may shed a revealing light on the poet's predisposition, the

formative experiences of his early years, the crises that shaped his mind; they afford no clues as to the reason for the power his creative acts have on the reader. Whatever may be the genetic process of causation, the work stands as an aesthetic challenge in its own right, to be apprehended in its own integrity. Only after this is successfully accomplished is the further work of historical illumination and genetic research rewarding. Books like Blackmur's *The Double Agent,* William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, for all its "metaphysical" excess, John Crowe Ransom's *The New Criticism*, Cleanth Brooks's *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, possess a density, a technical competence and insight, a power of textual analysis and clarification, that make of criticism an exciting voyage of discovery and exploration. Even when we disagree with the critic's conclusions, his work of explication is at least carefully documented and we can determine wherein he goes wrong. He provides an empirical basis for argument and dissent. Otherwise we are lost in a jungle of abstract theory.

Modern Poetry and the Tradition, for example, at least focuses attention on the important fact that poets must employ language, images, and metaphors, and master a complex technique. It takes up the metaphor for clinical examination, indicating how figures of speech are valid only in relation to the total context in which they appear. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's *Shakespeare's Imagery* offers the literary critic a novel method of reaching to the heart of a poet's work, discovering an author's inner secret, his pattern of perception, feeling, thought, and imagination. The poet betrays himself through his images, which reveal the quality of his mind. In such a method, the text is the thing; the poem is the point of departure and the terminus. There is less temptation for the critic to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of some political ideal which has no organic connection with the work under consideration.

One of the most ambitious attempts to tackle the problem of sociological criticism as applied to literature is to be found in Kenneth Burke's *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. Literature, according to this critic, consists of strategies for dealing with situations. A literary work, no matter how complex in form and content, is essentially a design for marshaling armies of ideas. What is implicit in the social order becomes explicit in literature. The writer embodies the moral and aesthetic values

of his age without becoming aware that these are the product of objective socio-economic conditions.

Though committed to the Communist ideal, Kenneth Burke is not arbitrary in his judgments. He is saved from gross error by his eager intellectual curiosity, the adventurous skepticism of his mind, his zestful capacity to appreciate literature as such. Yet his methodological bias leads him to make affirmations and appraisals which have but a tangential relationship to literature itself. In his eyes, the criteria of communism have a high humanistic content. In *Counter-Statement* he had taken the Marxist critics to task for transforming economics into cause and art into effect, though admitting that the emotional core of art may by indirection involve political and economic attitudes. Then, in his later books, Kenneth Burke openly embraced communism because it could furnish a master purpose centering around freedom. Communism is "a co-operative rationalization" in harmony with the poetic metaphor. Unfortunately, such an approach offers little that is helpful to the critic in search of a method. The net result is a framework of categories as abstract and unrelated to art as Christopher Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality*.

Marxist critics, with the exception of Kenneth Burke, suffer from no dilemmas of doubt. They have a comprehensive and infallible formula which can be applied to every conceivable case. Is a writer torn in heart and mind? Unquestionably he is the victim of the tense contradictions of the society in which he lives. He reflects the heritage of a dying feudalism or the chaotic conflicts of capitalism or the confused values of the bourgeois mentality. Does he turn Catholic? Then he is seeking an avenue of escape, but there is none. The only redemption is through the mediation of the Marxist synthesis. All other proposed solutions are drugs. There is little hint in the writings of Communist critics like Granville Hicks (before his defection) and Joseph Freeman and Michael Gold of the fundamental problem of art—or if there is, it is closely tied up with ideological and political valuations.

The most brilliant as well as the most audacious effort to apply Marxist principles to literature and art is Christopher Caudwell's *Illusion and Reality*. Written by a devout Communist, it relates the development of English poetry to the material conditions of society. Rejecting all exclusively aesthetic categories in the criticism of art, Caudwell begins with the confident assumption that art is a social product and that any criti-

cism of art must therefore contain a sociological component. By means of the dialectic, Caudwell can account for any contradiction in the body of culture. For each successive stage of capitalistic production, there is a corresponding reflection in the ideological superstructure. Art will inevitably betray its class-character in a class-stratified society. All consciousness, according to this militant philosophy, is socially determined. To those bourgeois writers who are still hesitating, Caudwell addresses these words in behalf of the proletariat:

> There is no neutral world of art, free from categories of determining causes. Art is a social activity. . . . You must choose between class art which is unconscious of its causality and is therefore to that extent false and unfree, and proletarian art which is becoming conscious of its causality and will therefore emerge as the truly free art of communism. There is no classless art except communist art, and that is not yet born; and class art today, unless it is proletarian, can only be the art of a dying class.

This has a familiar but already "dated" and doctrinnaire ring. There is the challenging imperative: either-or! One is either a Communist or a Fascist, a believer in the high destiny of the aroused proletariat or else an emasculated and doomed bourgeois. There is something incredibly naive in playing with dialectical categories as if they were real, in assuming that Communism will miraculously solve all the problems, social and creative, that the poet has to face. This is the substance out of which faith—a fanatical faith—not a critical method, is woven.

Max Eastman in *Artists in Uniform* and James T. Farrell in *A Note on Literary Criticism*, as well as a band of other critics of different persuasions, had sought to put an end to the dogma of the class war and the belief in the classless State as applied to literature; such abstractions were irrelevant to the art of criticism. For a time it looked as if literary Marxism were happily dead and buried, but the news of its decease was apparently a bit premature. If dead, its ghost has come back to haunt us in a book of literary criticism by Harry Slochower, *No Voice Is Wholly Lost.* By destroying the class basis of society and the competitive conflicts to which it gives rise, Marxism, we are told, paves the way for the advent of universal humanist culture. Marxism reconciles all opposites, all contradictions; it is the epitome of truth and peace, the champion of humanity, the guarantee of freedom.

It is astonishing at this late date, after the collapse of literary Marxism in the '30's, to discover a volume of literary criticism that still seriously

preaches the doctrine of the class war. Marxist categories are marched in full array and the cultural products are measured against these standards. Where these categories cannot be legitimately applied, a touch of Freudian symbolism will serve the purpose just as well. As far as possible, however, in Slochower's book, the Marxist perspective is preserved, but in a terminology that has grown pseudo-technical and strategically nonrevolutionary. Yet throughout it is taken for granted that whatever work the writer produces is determined by the material conditions of his time and place: the conflicts of capitalism, the emergence of industrialism, the alienation of the mass of workers from society. Distinctions are made which do not actually illuminate the books and writers under discussion; semantic nuances and "puns" and symbolic motifs, in the manner of Kenneth Burke to whom Slochower is greatly indebted for his method, are brought in as well as a generous sprinkling of quotation marks for words used in "special" senses. Only rarely does the critic make any effort to evaluate specifically those qualities in a work—its significance, its appeal, its beauty—which raise it to the level of art.

The most astonishing performance in *No Voice Is Wholly Lost*—an uncanny bit of dialectical transubstantiation—is the effort to reconcile Freudianism with Marxism. The reconciliation, as is often the way with Marxism, turns out to be a cannibalistic feast: Freudianism is eaten alive! How? By showing that Freud derived his theories from the treatment of middle-class patients. Therefore, his science is presumably a "middle-class" science! Now if anything is convincingly clear it is that Freud meant what he said, and his published writing is there as confirmatory evidence. It is a species of arrant effrontery to twist and discount his meaning by viewing it through perspectives favorable to the Marxist outlook. The manner in which the content of the neuroses is expressed may vary; the neuroses themselves persist, because all cultures act as a repressive force on the egocentric desires of the Id, and, given certain organisms, these neuroses would appear even in a hypothetical classless society.

The Freudian conception of art, even as practiced by gifted and resourceful critics like Herbert Read and Ludwig Lewisohn and John Middleton Murry, fails to carry conviction. Why should the artist who sublimates his repressed impulses be condemned? Every one suffers from this necessity for instinctual renunciation, but how many take the road

that leads to artistic expression? Art, in the hands of the Surrealists, for example, becomes an elaborate, if disguised, wish-fulfillment. From this arises the baroque and grotesque art of the Surrealists, with its dialectical resolution of dream and reality. Subjective and irresponsible, it glories in the exhibition of the eccentric, the anarchic, the pathological, the scatological.

This methodological bias appears full blast in Richard Guggenheimer's *Sight and Insight: A Prediction of New Perceptions,* which takes it for granted that the science of psychotherapy can contribute as much to the psychology of aesthetics as it can to the psychology of mental disease. Guggenheimer proceeds to study the lives of various men of genius in order to disclose what he is pleased to call the constructive abnormality present in all such personalities. "The more thoroughly one looks into the authentic records of the men who have contributed the great treasures of artistic, religious, scientific achievements to the world," he says, "the more completely convinced one becomes that no one of these impressive figures is without greater or lesser characteristics of mental abnormality." Now it is surely possible by selecting a number of key figures—Dostoyevski, Leonardo da Vinci, Van Gogh, Edgar Allen Poe, and William Cowper, for example—to "prove" this thesis to the hilt. Guggenheimer refers to the affliction of Schopenhauer, the profound melancholia of William James, the heightened sensibility of various poets and artists and musicians, who were the medium for mysterious inspirational forces, the demon of the unconscious, but no exploration of the genetic sources of art has yet succeeded in disclosing a valid, functional basis for the critical evaluation of works of art. Here the Freudian system of aesthetics, despite its dynamic influence on literature during the past three decades, bogs down, thus confirming R. G. Collingwood's judgment in *The Principles of Art* that "The contribution of psychology to pseudo-aesthetics is enormous; to aesthetics proper it is nil."

Critical discourse is thus appraisive and prescriptive in character. Its primary purpose is to defend values, to battle for ideas. Yvor Winters, in *The Anatomy of Nonsense,* asks questions that neither the Marxists nor Freudians have attempted to answer: Are there reliable standards of value by which poetry may be judged? Can we, for example, say on good grounds that one of John Donne's "Holy Sonnets" is superior to Collins' "Ode to Evening"? If not, he argues, then we are lost in a trackless

wilderness of impressionism. Yet we are constantly making such evaluative judgments. Opposed to both the impressionists and the relativists, Winters insists that the poetic experience is governed by principles that are constant and subject to analysis and evaluation. The object of the critic is to discover what these principles are and how to apply them. Poetry can be rationally elucidated. Communication becomes possible between two critics when they take the trouble to formulate their principles of judgment.

When the critic deals with literature proper, his first task is that of analysis followed by appraisal, but there is a fundamental restriction as to the kind of analysis he shall undertake. What he looks for in a work, however, is determined in advance by his conception of the ideal standard which literature should seek to approximate, so that the questions the critic asks really involve a complete philosophy of aesthetics, if not a philosophy of life. Though this follows logically from the nature of critical inquiry, sanity lies in not deviating too radically from the work under consideration. For it is only by showing the degree to which this work satisfies the conditions of art that the critic is fulfilling his primary obligation. Only after this obligation has been carried out, may he, like Kenneth Burke, go much further and seek to discover the way in which content is revelatory of form, and thus develop a sociological criticism.

Since the poet is constrained to write about that which engrosses him most, he is compelled to take up his burdens. In this sense, argues Kenneth Burke, his content and his method of treatment are psychically determined. Burke therefore looks for points of correlation between style and burdens. The creative purpose of the poet, according to this psychosociological theory, is to cure his disease by magic, externalize it within the ritualized strategy of art. Burke is interested in discovering the underlying pattern of motivation to be found in various "poetic" situations—a method that is carried to great lengths in *A Grammar of Motives*, his latest work.

Now regardless of the validity of this critical theory, it is an independent creation, as original and fascinating in its dramatic resolution of ideas as any system of philosophy. Burke reveals facets of meanings in a work, shifts of taste, psychic conflicts, symbolic enactments, which may not have been clear to the writers themselves. And his aesthetic doctrine is valuable and illuminating apart from the individual work of

writers like Gide or Hemingway or Caldwell or Whitman, whom he may use for purposes of illustration. That is true, more or less, of the contributions of the best contemporary critics. They are not bound by the limiting conditions imposed by any work or body of writing. Their mind outsoars these limits. Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle* is more than a clinical analysis of literary tendencies; it is a searching and sensitive examination of literature in its relation to society and of the role of the writer in modern civilization. There are always challenging and complex problems which the adventurous critic is called upon to solve. He is an original and independent creator in his own right. Literary criticism is as fruitful and respectable a branch of literature as any other, and can be read for its own sake, just as we read poetry or fiction. Critics battle for values, champion new ideas, turn the current of taste into new channels, explore new areas of consciousness and of expression, and promulgate new theories which in turn leave their mark on the writing of their time. Finally, they reveal the history of their own intellectual crises and conflicts, and their resolution.

The purposes of criticism go beyond analysis and interpretation. They also include evaluation and leadership. Criticism serves an important function. It is an autonomous and indispensable activity. It makes readily accessible those ideas and influences which supply the substance of art. It prepares the cultural soil in which the work of the writer must take root and grow. It consolidates the ideological victories of an age. It is both a trail blazer and a guide. It furnishes incentive and encouragement and understanding to the creative worker. It imposes a discipline without which literature would remain undirected, uncertain of itself. A large part of the weakness and futility of American letters in the twentieth century is due to the lack of a sound, original criticism.

Criticism is the cross-fertilization of a philosophy and a temperament. Critics may adopt the same general outlook, but their work will differ because they possess different degrees of sensitivity, insight, and imagination. Since criticism is the expression of a temperament as well as the reflection of a fairly consistent philosophy of aesthetics, diversity is to be expected. Different methods of evaluation are bound to appear. But one thing is certain: while uniformity is not desirable, we are justified in demanding some evidence of consistency. Once a critic has taken his position, he has no right to contradict himself.

The charge might be raised that this sanctions, if it does not encourage, eclecticism in critical matters. This is true, but what of it? Dogmas, as I. A. Richards points out in *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, still the best book in the field of critical theory, are as harmful as prejudices, and the candid, conscientious critic will throw them overboard. For if he clings to them, they will prevent him from seeing the poem as it is. The only remedy, in the precarious and unchartered universe of letters as of life, is for the critic to allow his choice to function freely, without the interference of arbitrary critical doctrines and categorical principles. The first task is to respond, not to judge. Only after a close and sympathetic reading of the text so that the experience which it communicates has been completely grasped, is the critic at liberty to decide on its value. The good critic must be adept at experiencing the state of mind directly relevant to the work of literature he is judging, and this demands that he shut out the irrelevant and the eccentric.

After this initial work of response has been completed, the critic seeks to orient his impressions within a framework of values which he believes literature should serve. It follows as a result that philosophies of criticism, like other philosophic systems, are diverse. The critic is a person with a history and a temperament; he has been exposed to a number of selective experiences out of all those he might have encountered. It is therefore to be expected that a plurality of aesthetic systems will emerge out of the interaction of the critical mind with the culture of his time. The critic is more attracted to some works and ideas than to others, and out of these preferences he creates a conception of what is "good" and "beautiful" and "true." There is little to deplore in such a plurality of aesthetic systems and critical methods. For out of these ingredients will eventually be formed a comprehensive synthesis of aesthetics that can do justice to the vast profusion and variety of material at the disposal of the modern age. The only positive guide in criticism is that dogmatism, the mainstay of the authoritarian personality, should be eliminated.

DISCUSSION

What Is An Authoritarian Policy?

In an interesting article published by *The Antioch Review,* Mr. W. D. Grampp described my proposals about the institutions desirable for post-Fascist Italy as "typical examples" of an "authoritarian policy"; according to my proposals, Mussolini's corporate system should be retained; "in the hands of a righteous government" it would be "a great force for good" (Fall, 1946, p. 350). I should like to take exception to this statement. Ideas—right or wrong as they may be—are the only property of the man who dwells with ideas. Even if he is of little or no account, he is entitled to protect them against misunderstanding.

Everything depends on the meaning one gives to the words "authoritarian policy."

If they are taken to mean the intervention of political authority in economic life, all governments are "authoritarian." They intervene, to varying degrees, in economic life, if by no other fact than that they build roads, impose taxes, and issue currency. The English government, while it practiced free trade in the nineteenth century, gave the earliest examples of social legislation, i.e., it intervened in economic life to protect the workers against the abuse of *laissez faire*. Today, as Mr. Grampp has rightly remarked, the government in Italy—and everywhere—must widen its economic activities immensely. If such a policy is termed "authoritarian," I could not object to being described as a man whose ideas are examples of an authoritarian policy. Any American New Dealer would be "authoritarian" like myself.

There is, however, another meaning to the words "authoritarian policy." They mean the suppression of personal rights, political liberties, and representative institutions, and the regimentation of the population into economic groups created from above by the political authorities and ruled by men chosen from above by the political authorities—groups whose members have no say in the policies of the government and of their own economic organizations. This was the "authoritarian policy" of the Fascist so-called "corporate" institutions.

My authentic opinions about what those institutions should have become when the Fascist dictatorship collapsed are to be found in an article I contributed to the *Nation* of August 7, 1943, and in the book *What to do With Italy,* which George La Piana and I published in September, 1943.

In the *Nation,* I stated that the Italian population was not shapeless dust. It was organized into associations of employers and professional men, and unions of clerks and workers. The secretaries of these economic groups were appointed by the directors of the Fascist Party, were not accountable to the membership and wielded unlimited powers over the membership. In my opinion, the Allied authorities should have dismissed these men from their posts as soon as a town had been occu-

pied. But they should have avoided the mistake of leaving the organizations leaderless and inactive. Such organizations "should be the cornerstone of the new regime." The membership of each economic group should have been summoned as soon as possible to choose a secretary in whom they had confidence. "The members know each other. They know who, during the past twenty years, did not become an auxiliary of the Fascist evildoers." When the members of the economic organization had elected their new secretaries, the latter should have been summoned to designate the provisional mayor for the city or town. The occupying authorities would have retained the right to veto reckless decisions and to oust unreliable men. But the selection of new officials should have been made by the citizens themselves, and not by the occupying authorities. Then, after six months, or at the most, a year, the electorate should have been summoned to choose, by universal suffrage, their permanent municipal administrators. The Italian people would thus, through trial and error, begin on the work of its own reorganization.

I do not think that those proposals meant that Mussolini's corporate system was to be retained. An organization whose members freely choose their own officials and discuss and approve or disapprove of their management, and an organization whose members have no say either in the choice of officials or their management, undoubtedly have in common the fact that both are "organizations." But what do they have in common except that word? A table and a tiger are both endowed with four legs. Do those four legs make a tiger of the table, or a table of the tiger?

The Allied authorities dissolved all existing economic organizations, and thus reduced the population to a chaos of isolated and voiceless individuals. The small fellow could only bow and obey, while the big fellow always found a way of contacting the Allied higher-ups. (One can guess what would happen in New York if a Sicilian, who had never been in America, was made governor of New York by military occupation authorities, after all groups into which the population of the city had been organized, were dissolved.) The occupying authorities then bestowed legal recognition upon six gangs of politicians who had auto-designated themselves as representatives of parties (one of which had no followers anywhere) and upon a so-called National Confederation of Labor, formed by agents of the Communist, Socialist and Christian-Democratic Parties. These gentlemen, in their turn, bestowed legal recognition upon the local branches of the parties and the Confederation. Instead of one single party—the Fascist Party—controlling all economic groupings, there were now three parties that appropriated the Fascist method of running the show through commands from above. As for local elections, they were called in Sicily two years after the "liberation"; in central Italy, eighteen months later; and in northern Italy one year later. Meanwhile the cities and towns of southern Italy and of most of central Italy were entrusted to the care of men chosen by the central committees of the parties legally recognized by the allied authorities. This was humorously termed "democracy." Democracy in Italy, from the fall of 1943 on, meant subservience to the British and American military occupying authorities.

There were good reasons why this method was chosen. If the population

had been allowed freely to elect new secretaries of the existing organizations, and then to designate provisional mayors through their newly chosen secretaries, an eruption of republican secretaries and mayors would have resulted. Churchill and Roosevelt were pledged to support the House of Savoy as best they could in order to get its subservience in return. Thus all local organizations through which a prevalently republican opinion might find expression, were to be abolished, and national committees of politicians pledged to the so-called "institutional truce" were entrusted with the task of preventing local organizations from trespassing from the economic into the political field of action. Municipal elections also were postponed as long as possible in order to give the monarchical forces time to reorganize and to resist the republican onslaught.

This brand of British-American "authoritarian policy" never met with my approval.

To be sure, I had written that the economic organization inherited from the Fascist regime should have been the cornerstone of the new regime. But what did these words mean? Are they to be regarded as a typical example of an authoritarian policy? The answer to this question is to be found in the book *What to do With Italy*, pp. 229-231 and 238-243.

In those pages the Italians who were to build up the new regime were advised not to be led by blind hatred into destroying without discrimination everything that had been done by the Fascist dictatorship. There is no good government which does not make mistakes, and there is no government, however bad, which does not set up something worth preserving. The Fascist dictatorship had found in existence in Italy a wide network of organizations created through the spontaneous and free action of its members and administered by officers freely chosen by them. The Fascist regime disbanded them, confiscated their assets, and then instituted the so-called Corporative System. "This framework ought to be preserved *and so modified as to fit the new order.*" "By dismissing the Fascist officials and returning to the members their former right to choose their local, provincial and national secretaries and to plan their policy and programs of action, these organizations would be vitalized and would function effectively in the new republican regime." The Italians should avoid the evils which beset American unions, such as exhorbitant initiation fees, the formation of an aristocracy of high-salaried labor czars responsible to no one, and the monopoly of labor claimed by special groups to the detriment of other bona fide organizations. The National Council of Fasces and Corporations must disappear, and its place be taken by a national parliament elected by universal suffrage. But besides this parliament, which should move in the sphere of what are called "political" affairs, there should be other representative bodies to whom "technical" affairs might be entrusted. "The various Councils of corporations, *purged of all Fascist connotations and composed of members elected by the various trades,* could very well be assigned this task." They would form, so to speak, small technical parliaments side by side with the national parliament. Each of them would deal with a specific group of problems, formulate within the limits of its jurisdiction the by-laws necessary to carry out the general principles

of law already approved by the national parliament, and watch the daily work of the permanent officials entrusted with executive powers. Today one single parliament is no longer able to cope with the enormous volume of matters needing consideration. The drawbacks of parliamentary government can be eliminated only if the national parliament reserves for its own jurisdiction the problems that affect the nation as a whole, and delegates all other matters to other representative minor bodies, each of which specializes in a specific group of problems. "The higher parliament and the lower parliaments should be legislative organs which the government bureaucracy must obey, and not merely consultative bodies subservient to the will of a dictator or of a government bureaucracy pulling the strings behind the scenes. Moreover, both higher and lower parliaments should be freely elected, the higher parliament by the generality of citizens; the lower parliament by those social groups having a special interest in the problem with which they are to deal. Finally all problems should be publicly and freely discussed. This is the essential procedure of democracy."

Are these typical examples of an authoritarian mode of thinking? If so, democracy also would be authoritarian, and no believer in the democratic doctrine could avoid being termed an authoritarian.

To be sure, there is something in common between the Fascist Councils of Corporations and the lesser Parliaments spoken of by La Piana and myself. Both the former and the latter are public bodies and are part and parcel of a larger network. But here again one may observe that both Hitler and Ghandi were endowed with two legs. Were they one and the same man for this reason? And did they differ from the table and the tiger solely on account of the fact that they had two and not four legs? A few common but non-essential features do not make opposite institutions the same. Hitler and Ghandi had two different souls, and their souls were their different essential features.

In his article, Mr. Grampp gave as the final example of the staying power of authoritarianism, the labor unions of Italy. These, "the first free associations of workers in some twenty years, are dissatisfied with their present status of voluntary organizations and are seeking to make membership compulsory for all workers." This would be an imitation of Mussolini's effort to regiment labor in the corporative state and of Hitler's labor front. Mr. Grampp is correct in making these statements. And it is quite possible that Communists and Catholics—basically "authoritarian" in doctrine—will succeed in reviving the Fascist corporative regime. In my opinion, this solution of the problems should be condemned by any believer in democracy. This is why I think I am entitled to object when Mr. Grampp classifies my opinion under the heading of "authoritarian policy." No government, in my opinion, is righteous. All governments are an evil, an evil made unavoidable by necessity, but to be restricted as much as possible. Of all forms of government, the Fascist corporate system is one of the worst. It could never be a force for good.

GAETANO SALVEMINI

Some Problems for Planners

Professor Salvemini is understandably agitated at having described as authoritarian his proposal to retain the corporate structure of Fascism as the framework for economic planning in the new Italian state, and I may say that this description was applied with regret to the ideas of a man whose enmity to dictatorship is of long standing and whose championing of liberty must arouse the admiration of everyone. He believes my criticism is unjust, because I take no account of his advocating that the corporate bodies be freely chosen by the people and subject to a democratically controlled parliament, the presumption being that these devices would prevent the planning authority from usurping power and becoming a despotic bureaucracy. At the risk of appearing obstinate, I must remain unconvinced that such methods are compatible with democracy and would raise two kinds of questions which seem relevant to such a proposal.

If each functional group in the economy is to be given power to plan within its sphere, how are the actual *planners* to be chosen? Professor Salvemini states that the *officials* of each corporate body will be chosen freely by the members of each producing group (laborers, farmers, etc.), but will these officials actually execute the plans? Economic planning calls for a high degree of technical competence and administrative ability. Are the people to elect the experts? If so, how are they to pass upon the expert ability of the condidates? Or are the elected leaders to delegate responsibility to appointed technicians and administrators? If they are, this implies that competence is not something to be adjudged by majority vote and consequently not subject to popular control. Gross failure can be detected easily of course, but it is no easy matter to assign responsibility; even if it were, one cannot wait for obvious mismanagement before making a change.

If the difficulties of planning a single industry are great, the difficulty of executing a national economic plan is immeasurably greater, as each industry must be assigned its precise place in the aggregate plan and each functional group must view its activity as a contribution to the national welfare and not to its private interest. Assuming that the overwhelming majority of people took such a beneficent view, where are the national planners to be found and how are they to be chosen? One can surmise the difficulties which national planning would encounter in Italy, a country so singularly backward in applying its economic knowledge that the tax system, for example, is atavistic even when judged by the standards of a century ago.

Beyond these technical problems there is another set of questions, central to which is the matter of keeping the planning authority within its jurisdiction and yet giving it enough power to execute successfully its responsibility of keeping the economy functioning at a high level. Persons skeptical of extensive planning are often dismissed as being unrealistic. May I suggest that the planners are not fully exploiting their monopoly of practical wisdom, that they may profitably turn their attention to such problems as these: In each economy of the western world, there are millions of prices which register the decisions to consume and pro-

duce of tens of millions of persons. How, precisely, are the decisions to be made concerning what to produce and in what quantities, and what incomes and prices shall be, without giving the planning authority an amount of arbitrary power which would abridge drastically a number of individual liberties that have come to be regarded as inviolable? I do not refer to the freedom to accumulate large amounts of property, of inheritance and bequest, and the like (most persons have little opportunity of exercising these liberties) but of the freedom of an individual to choose his occupation and employer and the freedom to spend his income as he pleases. Professor Salvemini states that the corporate bodies will be watched scrupulously by parliament. But how can the planning authority discharge its responsibility without enormous powers of coercion, including —especially in the case of Italy where resources are badly allocated and poorly managed — the power to force individuals into certain occupations of great usefulness to the nation and to make them satisfied with those goods which the planners think it best for them to consume? The common reply to this question is the cynical remark that you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs—which is neither very enlightening nor very liberal. Is parliament to foresee that coercion will be required and mitigate its harshness? If so, it merely is softening the blows of the planning bureaucracy. If not, it quickly will learn that planning without coercion is as feasible as a military general staff without disciplinary powers. The very placing of responsibility for a high national income and stability upon the planning authority implies enormous arbitrary powers which by their nature are not subject to parliamentary control.

It is my belief that the kind of economic power which Professor Salvemini would delegate to the state would have one of two issues. Either the parliament eventually would give over to the corporate bodies all of the power which they necessarily would need in order to control the economy successfully, or it would turn the economy back to the market in sheer desperation at the magnitude of the task of controlling it. The latter alternative being quite unlikely, the corporate bodies would become in effect the state, the administrators transforming themselves into the new ruling class and executing their plans in a thoroughly authoritarian fashion, the final result being a state which Professor Salvemini would be among the first to excoriate.

For this reason, I find Professor Salvemini's proposals alarming, and it is distressing to find them coming from a man who has done so much to open our eyes to reactionary forces and who has spoken with so vigorous a voice on behalf of the common people everywhere.

William D. Grampp

WE NOTE . . .

Big Steal?

The spotlight of monopoly and high prices have recently fallen with some sharpness on the steel industry. Early in September Stewart Alsop, liberal Republican columnist, broke a story to the effect that the President's Council of Economic Advisors had virtually gone down on its collective knees to the big steel corporations in a plea not to raise prices. According to Alsop, the members of the Council now saw the policies of Big Steel contributing in the near future not to a recession, but to a depression. Steel policies, he suggested, included a refusal to absorb recent wage increases in a maintained price level (which could have been accomplished without difficulty by the steel corporations), refusal to turn profits back into expanded plant capacity, and a decision to stow excess funds away against the expected contingency that the country would soon be in for hard times. Alsop concluded that "it takes no more than an ounce of political imagination to understand that the American political and economic system will hardly survive the onslaught of another severe depression. Thus, curiously, the industrialists who are planning on a depression are also planning on the probability, if not the certainty, of the destruction of the system which they have most reason to protect." Although Dr. Edwin Nourse, chairman of the economic council, later denied Alsop's "revelations," the columnist obviously had laid hold of a hot and timely subject.

Small manufacturers have claimed for some time that they have great difficulty today in getting the steel they need because they cannot meet the demands of a "gray market" which has sprung out of current scarcity. On September 12, Senator Martin of Pennsylvania, another Republican, opened hearings before the Senate special steel committee, of which he is chairman, with a warning that a "public be damned" policy on the part of the steel industry might "lead to government policing — perhaps even nationalization." Such nationalization, he noted, had already been suggested on the floor of the Senate.

On the same day before another Senate committee, for small business, Otis Brubaker, director of research of the United Steelworkers, asked immediate expansion of steel-making facilities. It takes time and money to expand, he conceded, and he proposed that the government assume part of the financial risk. If this did not work out, he concluded, there would be no alternative but for the government to construct the necessary facilities.

To all this the men of steel replied somewhat as to be expected. U.S. Steel policy, in the words of Benjamin Fairless, was "just the reverse of a 'public be damned' attitude. . . . we have tried to distribute our steel production equitably among many thousands of steel users." Eugene Grace denied that Bethlehem Steel had sold a pound of steel "in the so-called black market or gray

market. Our policy has always been a continuous one of enlarging facilities to care for the national economy." But out of the mouths of babes—the tough babes of the steel industry—came a more nearly forthright statement. It was the considered conclusion of Tom Girdler of Republic Steel "that a substantial increase in our steel capacity at this time would contribute nothing but further inflation."

Several years ago, at a time when the CIO was young and the national fate of collective bargaining seemed to hang in the balance, it was the leaders of United States Steel who took the lead and came to agreement with the steelworkers. The fact that a fully mobilized strike was threatening and that public opinion was aware of the danger cannot take away the fact that the nation's largest steel corporation at a crucial moment showed industrial statesmanship. The biggest single battle for modern trade unionism was won then and there, nor have the essential gains been lost since. Since V-J Day although many labor leaders publicly feared the sabotaging of organized labor's prerogatives and of collective bargaining at a time more favorable to the employer, Big Steel has acted toward labor in good faith. In correcting wage inequities within the industry and in attitudes toward collective bargaining, its negotiations with the CIO-USA in the spring of this year have become a kind of model for other industries to shoot toward.

That is not to say, however, that Big Steel sees and accepts its public responsibilities. Formerly it was accustomed to base its profitable operation on running at 50 per cent of capacity, and the well founded suspicion has got around that it plans on returning to that base of operation in the not too distant future. Only on such an explanation does it seem possible to predicate its current level of unprecedented profits, the fact that it has raised prices to accord with increased wages (for the second time since the war), and the fact that its plans for expansion, both in the recent past and in the present, are woefully inadequate for an expanded postwar national economy. As its critics point out, so basic is steel to other industries that by hedging its own plans on the possibility of a depression, it is helping mightily to bring that depression about plus the conditions favorable to nationalization, which steel executives surely wish to avoid.

Can the leaders in steel be made to see the light? Can they be shown the folly of hiding huge excess funds in an old mattress in expectation of an economic hurricane? Perhaps they could be, in time—if there were enough of it. Public opinion is already mobilizing, and steel has in the past shown itself not entirely cold to public opinion when it is strong enough. But there is no strike or threat of a strike to dramatize the crisis.[1] This time the area lacks a powerfully interested pressure group to bring the issue quickly to public consciousness and precipitately to some kind of action. Time, effort, and the threat of nationalization are necessary, and time, in particular, is already short.

The effect of such policies on our domestic economy are serious enough. But the repercussions on our position in foreign affairs will be still more dis-

[1]The United Steelworkers have not tied their trade union demands to any requirements of policy on prices as Walter Reuther has done so eloquently in the UAW-CIO's negotiations with the auto industry. But they do not entirely neglect the public interest as Mr. Brubaker's words, referred to above, indicate.

behind schedule. Argument against the astrous, for without immediate, short-term action to rescue Europe, no long-term planning of a vigorous, democratic type will be possible. The Marshall Plan is already running somewhat plan, which at worst will destroy it and at best delay it, will inevitably take the line that we "can't afford such foreign expenditures." The argument will be reinforced if danger signals go up for any important section of the American economy.

That is the immediate evil of short-sighted policies in steel. But the long-term threat immediately follows. If we fail to implement the Marshall Plan, Europe will be swept by communism. And if that happens, America, in fear and in reaction, will become an armed camp. That the last pretense to free enterprise would fold up under such pressures, would, of course, be only one of many revolutionary results. But it is a result which leaders in steel might well ponder whenever they are tempted by the vision of profitable operation at 50 per cent of capacity. P. B.

Union Labor and American Aid for Europe

Both the CIO and the AFL are giving support to the Truman Doctrine for aid to Greece to protect it against totalitarian aggression on its borders, to rebuild a ravaged industry and agriculture, and to bring the conditions of national security and peace which are necessary for a free democratic expression of the people's will. This support broadens into support of the Marshall Plan for a co-operative systematic endeavor for the economic reconstruction of Europe.

One concrete expression of support for American aid to Greece was the appointment, with AFL and CIO support, of Clinton S. Golden as labor advisor to Dwight Griswold, administrator of the American Mission for Aid to Greece.

William Green, AFL president, praised the mission and Golden's appointment, and said that American labor is opposed to "any form of oppression, tyranny or totalitarian control of people anywhere in any section of the world." The mission is an effort to promote economic, social and political democracy. "We are inspired by a sincere effort to extend a full measure of support to President Truman in the realization of this objective."

In his approval of Golden's appointment Murray drew a broad picture of one aspect of America's liberal foreign policy. "The CIO," he said, "has high hope and confidence in the American Mission for Aid to Greece. In a large measure the AMAG is an event in history, because it reflects the determined effort of a mighty people here in America to aid the people of another country to develop their own economic capabilities." Murray did not separate the economic and political aspects of American aid to Greece, but tied them in together and emphasized economic aid as necessary to prevent right-left political extremism: "Fortunately, the United States is not hampered with a tradition of developing limited political programs in other countries. We have in our tradition, of course, the case of the Philippines. While that venture, which paid tremendous dividends to both the Filipino and American peo-

ples, might be cited as an example of American colonial policy, the Philippines similarly were a trail-blazing experiment. . . . The AMAG emerges out of a different background, a struggle of the whole world to preserve democracy. . . . In this plan political considerations become less important in the sense that the American people do not consider the political view the whole view. In Greece today, because of economic chaos, the Greek people are confronted with extreme political solutions of the left or right. Real democracy is not possible in a state of economic chaos."

And "if you believe in democracy," Clinton Golden said just before his departure for Greece in August, "you have to give tangible support to it or it isn't very significant. American labor's help to Greece will give Greek workers enthusiasm for building their labor movement on democratic foundations similar to ours. If the unions are to play some role beyond collective bargaining we must help extend democracy in other countries."

The communists and liberals of the Henry Wallace kind insisted that the Truman Doctrine of aid for Greece was wholly political. At first, Wallace acclaimed the Marshall Plan: it's what I've been urging all along, he said. Wallace liberals drew a distinction between the doctrine and the plan: the plan, they said, is constructive economics while the doctrine is destructive politics. Then Molotov walked out of the Anglo-Russian-French conference on the plan and repudiated it; the central-east European nations under Russian control joined in the repudiation; Czechoslovakia, after accepting the Marshall Plan, was humiliatingly forced to reject it upon telephone orders from Moscow. After which Henry Wallace discovered that the plan was another manifestation of "American warmongering." When the three-power conference on the plan broke up, the *Nation* published an editorial with the caption, "Molotov Splits Europe," but later many *Nation* writers, including Freida Kirchwey, began sniping at the plan as an American imperialist maneuver to enslave Europe. But the Truman Doctrine was never wholly political and the Marshall Plan is not wholly economic: they are different emphases of a policy that is necessarily economic *and* political. For if Russian expansionism keeps on unchecked, if nations are insecure, the economic reconstruction of Europe becomes impossible.

The interrelationship of the politics and economics of American aid for Europe was clearly recognized in the statement Golden issued when he accepted the post of labor advisor: "Internal communist opposition to the Marshall plan and to the Mission to Aid Greece will undoubtedly mean that the Greek communists will attempt to sabotage the mission's work." The greatest single project will be rebuilding Greece's highway system, which the Nazis thoroughly wrecked. "The unknown factor in this transportation job," said Golden, "is whether the guerrilla war will interfere with our work. It won't make sense if they blow up the bridges as fast as we build them."

Already, since the mission arrived in Greece and American aid began, a more liberal Greek government has been set up. The communists and their friends howled that the USA was intervening in Greece to support the vicious monarchist dictatorship. In the July 21, 1947 issue of the *New Republic* Constantine

Poulos wrote: "The first steps [toward dictatorship] have already been taken in Greece. . . . There is now another 'significant factor.' The United States 'is also granting aid to Turkey, which, if it has no dictatorship, neither does it have intemperate parliamentarism.' . . . Maybe Tsaldaris has seen a sign in the sky. And New York's newspaper headlines: 'We Rush Arms to Aid Greeks' War on Rebels.' " Well, and not for the first time, the prophets of inevitable American reaction to come were proved dead-wrong. Within one month, as a consequence of American aid, came this series of events: 1) A parliamentary revolt overthrew the reactionary coalition cabinet; 2) Tsaldaris tried hard to form an all-royalist-reactionary cabinet but failed; 3) Themistocles Sophoulis formed a new cabinet, with himself as premier, that moves in more liberal directions; 4) amnesty is offered all guerrillas who will lay down their arms (an amnesty opposed by both right and left), with a guarantee of no discrimination in employment in which Dwight Griswold, administrator of AMAG, joined. Deportations have ceased and thousands of political prisoners have been released by the new government.

On the Security Council, however, Soviet Russia opposed setting up a commission to investigate warfare on the Greek borders. Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia refused to co-operate, refused to let the commission investigate freely within their territory adjoining Greece. The Soviet representative on the council refused to accept the commission's findings that the three Russian satellites were instigating and supporting guerrilla war. And the Soviet veto was used to prevent organization of a permanent UN commission to watch the Greek borders and keep the peace. Now that the United States has asked the General Assembly of the United Nations to act on the Greek question (since the Soviet veto prevents action by the Security Council) Soviet Russia stigmatizes the move as "American war-mongering."

Another charge is that the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan are maneuvers to impose American imperialist subjugation on Europe, to back up "free enterprise capitalism" against socialism. This is altogether untrue of American policy in action. Clinton Golden repudiates the idea that we are in Greece to impose capitalism, and he gives an illustration of American behavior in Austria: "I recall a recent conversation with the president of the Austrian labor movement. The Austrian was profuse in his gratitude for *the fact that the American Military Government [AMG] has not forced Austria to accept capitalism*. The AMG told them, said the Austrian unionist, that they should nationalize whatever industries they wished with only one provision—the Austrians must make the decision themselves and not let it be imposed on them by any other nation or by armed force."

This is what happened in Austria: the government, a coalition of Christian democrats and liberal socialists, passed a comprehensive socialization law. The American military commander approved it: while not in accordance with American "free enterprise" principles, he said, the law has been adopted by a representative democratic parliament, by due process: O. K.

This is what has happened in the American zone in Germany in connection with socialization: The German states of Wuerttemberg-Baden, Bavaria,

Greater Hesse and Bremen have adopted constitutions with provisions for large powers to socialize enterprises, under law, either as public corporations or as co-operatives. One constitution provides that "if economic policy can be better attained without private ownership of productive resources or if the exercise of property rights conflicts with the common interests, appropriate enterprises and parts of the economy shall be transferred to public property by law." All these constitutions *have been approved* by the American authority in Germany.

These are not isolated facts but part of an American "socialization policy" in Germany as thus formulated by Gen. Lucius Clay, the United States military governor: "Although the American people believe in free enterprise, *they believe even more firmly in democracy*. Therefore the population of any German state is at *liberty to make its own decisions on the socialization of utilities or industries* affecting only their own section of Germany."

In the Ruhr an Anglo-American dispute on the *procedures* (not the principle) of socialization was resolved in favor of socialization within the framework of recognition of the Ruhr's war potential.

Finally, Gen. Douglas MacArthur has not interfered with the socialist coalition government in Japan. Nor has he opposed a measure for nationalization of the mines, limiting his intervention to the mines' output-goals.

It is clear that *American foreign policy in action* leaves the decision on socialization to the democratic action of the peoples involved. Where, then, is the imposition of "free enterprise capitalism" on "subjugated" peoples?

Nor are there any "no socialization" strings to the Marshall Plan. The plan is called "war-mongering" and is repudiated by Soviet Russia and by the nations under its control. But the free peoples of Europe accept the plan as their one great hope for security and democracy. Communists in Western Europe denounce the Marshall plan, but in the Netherlands and Scandinavia the communists, whose popular support is declining fast, soft-pedal opposition, and have said that while the plan must be looked at "in the light of the Truman Doctrine," it "should not be condemned in advance." The liberal socialists in all the sixteen cooperating countries support the Marshall Plan. In the words of Kurt Schumacher, outstanding German socialist: "The Social Democratic Party welcomes the plan as the only possibility of preserving the working population and bringing about the economic recovery not only of Germany but Europe as a whole. The plan moves in the direction of a European economy with a continental plan, as opposed to the present sum total of individual economies. It strengthens the idea of a United States of Europe." While Italy's "left-wing" socialists support communist criticism of American policy, the liberal socialist Sarragat says: "We consider the Marshall Plan an attempt to find a peaceful solution of European problems, which will otherwise be solved by war."

Of course, there is American opposition to a liberal foreign policy. The Baruchs and the Stassens are opposed to loans for any nation with a socialization policy. This opposition can work mischief and it must be fought. In a liberal democracy no policy is beyond opposition, no policy can be carried through without rallying popular sup-

port. But we must look at the picture in a balanced, objective fashion. At the recent Kenyon College conference on our liberal heritage, Senator Joseph Ball said: "We will of course want to have a long look at the Marshall Plan. But in general I don't want to use American dollars and American production to subsidize a lot of socialist economies. And socialism as an alternative to communism doesn't make sense." Senator Ball got one answer from a British Laborite speaker, who said: "The socialism of the Labor Party accepts the full implications of political democracy and government by consent. It does not seek to undermine the liberties of the individual." The final crushing answer to Senator Ball was given by an outstanding representative of American business, Paul G. Hoffman, president of Studebaker Corporation:

"The economic achievements of American free enterprise are great. But other nations should be *free to experiment with other systems if they desire or necessity prompts them to do so.* The Marshall Plan should be judged on its chances of working and on its potential relation to the prosperity and security of the United States. If there is so much as a 70-30 chance that the Marshall Plan, within five years, will succeed in restoring Europe to economic health, then we shouldn't stop to count the initial cost."

That is the voice of one representative of American business, who clearly does not want, as Vishinsky charges, "to subjugate Europe to United States monopolies, with the assistance of the British and French governments." Here is another voice—Joseph M. Dodge, president of the Detroit Bank and, until recently, financial advisor to the American military governor in Germany, who says: "The issue in Europe is not between democracy and free enterprise as we know it—but between socialism and the police state." Finally, George Kennan, chairman of the State Department's policy planning committee, said the other day that the issue in Europe is not "free enterprise capitalism" but liberal socialism *as democracy* against totalitarian communism. The accent is on liberal democracy.

Who, in the USA, oppose the Marshall Plan? It is not "capitalism" as a generalization but specific groups within capitalism. Among them are the communists and the fascists. Some businessmen are opposed, and so are some workers, farmers and professional people. A small but dangerous group wants to let Europe stew in its own death-blood while we let imperialism loose in Latin America and Asia. But the most important group are the survivals of isolationism—people who fail to see that our destiny is interlocked with the world's destiny, people who are afraid they may be asked to make some sacrifices. Senator Robert Taft (who has become, after Henry Wallace, the most extreme critic of American foreign policy), made an address in September in which petty partisan politics combined with an arrogant ingrained isolationism: "The administration is dominated by the 'Mr. Fixit' philosophy of the New Deal. . . . The so-called Marshall Plan is not a plan at all. . . . We cannot afford to go on lending money on a global scale. These loans in all human probability will never be repaid. . . . They are paid by heavy taxes on American production and American workers. . . . An international WPA will fail." Then Senator Taft joins with Vishinsky and Wallace to brand American policy as

imperialist: "We don't want to develop an era of American imperialism."

These are all dangers and they must be met with argument, discussion, and political action. But it must all be concrete. Certain liberals must get rid of the doctrinaire obsession that "capitalism is bad," so how can the foreign policy of an American "capitalist" government be a liberal policy? Within American capitalism there is liberal democracy, too, with its procedures for allowing the people to express their will. Doctrinaire "left"-liberals should learn from Gen. Lucius Clay: "The American people believe in free enterprise, *but they believe even more firmly in democracy.*"

The historical grandeur of the Marshall Plan is that it meets the challenge of Soviet expansionism, obstructionism, and imperialism *on the peaceful constructive level of economic reconstruction.* This is evident in the violence of Soviet reaction against the plan: the Soviet can offer no acceptable alternative, it can obstruct but it cannot kill. As the Marshall Plan helps to revive the economics of Europe the climate for left-right extremism will begin to moderate. Europe, moving toward liberal-democratic union, will emerge again as an independent force. It will be a force for peace and co-operation through the United Nations. The effect on the Soviet, too, will be salutary; in the words of Anne O'Hare McCormick: "If the Marshall Plan succeeds, if Western Europe becomes even relatively strong and stable, it will serve as a magnet not only for the eastern states *but for Russia itself.*"

The American people must rally increasing support for the Marshall Plan, especially for its economics. An important factor in this popular support will be the labor unions, whose spokesmen disagree with both the Soviet's Vishinsky and with Henry Wallace. (Except for a few unions under communist influence or control, which shout that American foreign policy, including the Marshall Plan, is "dictated by Wall Street to suppress and exploit the people of the world.")

For the American Federation of Labor —its executive council, in September, called for an inventory of American and international economic resources in accordance with the Marshall Plan, and said: "Our country should continue to extend all possible assistance to those countries which are willing to co-operate with us for the preservation of world peace." At the same time the executive board of the International Garment Workers Union called upon the AFL, at its convention in October, to endorse the Marshall Plan and to call a conference of the free trade unions of the sixteen co-operating European countries to insure union labor an active part in the plan and in economic reconstruction.

For the CIO—President Philip Murray has already wholeheartedly approved of American aid to Greece; moreover, it is reported that, at the CIO convention in October, Murray will ask for full approval of the Marshall Plan and for condemnation of Russian tactics in opposing it. And Walter Reuther, president of the UAW-CIO, in a letter to President Truman, gave his "hearty support to the calling of a special session of Congress to take action to meet the grave economic crisis in Europe."

Union spokesmen are not giving American foreign policy "blank-check" support. On the contrary, it is a critical, creative support. They are aware of re-

actionary forces that oppose a liberal policy in favor of isolationism or imperialism. From Philip Murray to Walter Reuther to David Dubinsky they urge that domestic and foreign policies are interlocked. If there is an American depression, they say, the Marshall Plan will fail. So they call for price controls and planning to avert a depression. L. C.

Liberals — and Liberals

On August 13 *The New York Times* carried a story from Belgrade, Yugoslavia quoting a group of eight prominent American clergymen as follows: "In the light of what we have seen and the inquiries we have made, we wish to state without reservation of any kind that there is today in Jugoslavia complete freedom of worship and respect for religious beliefs and institutions."

The statement was given out at the end of a two-week visit in Yugoslavia. The clergymen, according to report, had talked freely with many religious leaders in the country, had found Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac (previously convicted of collaboration with the enemy during the war) strong and well fed in his cell at the Poglava Prison, but with one exception, had not been in contact with any of the Catholic hierarchy nor with the Papal Nuncio or the Patriarch of the Serb Orthodox Church. As published elsewhere their report also included the following:

"This young country, emerging from centuries of foreign domination, is manifesting a spirit of unity and brotherhood and a determination to rebuild its shattered life that have won our profound admiration and respect. What we have seen has made us deeply conscious of the misrepresentation and outright falsification which are today provoking ill will toward Yugoslavia, whose story stripped of political and ecclesiastical propaganda, ought to receive the sympathetic and informed interest of world opinion."

Since publication of the news story, the clergymen's report has been publicly attacked by American Catholics and by others, and one of the visiting eight, Phillips P. Elliott, of the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, has replied in a letter to the *Times* that the discussion "is in danger of going far beyond the bounds of the subject studied," and that "on the very face of it," the charge that their report was a whitewash of the Yugoslav government "is absurd." There is the suggestion that some of the clergymen (we except the Rev. William H. Melish, whose apologetics for communism have become fairly well known) did not realize what they were letting themselves in for. Just how much ecclesiastical immunity can there be in anything having to do with a police state? Some light on the question may come from another news item.

On the same page of the *Times* carrying the clergymen's statement, another dispatch from Belgrade announced the sentencing to death of Professor Boris Furlan "found guilty of organizing a spy ring and working for the overthrow of the present regime." (The word has come since that his sentence has been commuted to twenty years imprisonment.)

Those Americans (including some of the editors of this Review) who knew

Boris Furlan recognized him as a man of the utmost sincerity and integrity. There may have been adventurers and men of guile among the wartime emigrés from Eastern Europe. Boris Furlan was not one of them. He was of the progressive left-wing, a Slovene of good will from Trieste, a teacher without personal ambitions. On the record, he believed in democracy up to the hilt and for this he enjoyed great authority among his friends.

In the fall of 1943 in company with a number of others from his native land, he broke all relations with the Royal government-in-exile and with the pro-Mikhailovich sympathizers. Of the United South Slav Committee, which was then formed in London, he became chairman, and he went on to wage a successful campaign for recognition of Tito's National Liberation Committee. A year and a half later he was invited by Tito's government to return to Yugoslavia. As those who knew him understood, he sincerely believed in the remarkable postwar opportunity opening up to the people of Yugoslavia to build democracy together with the Communists. He went home. He did not then know of the words spoken at a secret meeting of the Yugoslav Politbureau of the Communist Party a year and a half before by Edvard Kardelj, now Vice Premier of the Tito government: "The middle-of-the-road group is more and more active; it is the principal point of support for the reaction. . . . We must therefore direct all our fire against the group." (This statement became available later in a diary written by one of the participants, Vladimir Dedjr.)

The connection between the report of the eight visiting clergymen and the sentence of Boris Furlan is closer than stories of the same dateline published on the same page of the same newspaper. Since the clergymen left Yugoslavia, Vice Premier Kardelj has publicly stated that the trial of Boris Furlan "proved the existence of a tie-up between the church and opponents of the [Tito] regime."

The visiting clergymen found "scores of churches where services were being held, often with large crowds in attendance." They received a welcome from "Orthodox priests in Belgrade, Roman Catholic priests at Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo." This and other particular items listed by Mr. Elliott have a certain news value, and the present writer, for one, believes them. One would question, of course, why the report took an absolutist stand. (Was it catching?) Why did it state "without reservation of any kind that there is today in Yugoslavia complete freedom of worship"? Yet this may seem to be a minor matter in view of another, larger question.

If open churches and public welcome constituted the clergymen's idea of complete religious liberty and they were willing to trust their two-weeks' judgment, why did they not make reference to other reservations about the Tito regime? (Mr. Elliott did as much later on for himself in his personal letter of defense.) It is hard to believe that men can be so naive as not to know that their own statements issued under such circumstances must inevitably be political. It should take only ordinary maturity to discover that political "tie-ups" and "tie-ins" exist everywhere in a one-party state under stress and that they are ignored to the ethical peril of honest men.

To this writer's knowledge one of the visiting clergymen has been a pro-

fessional liberal, and it may be assumed that some of the others—perhaps all—consider themselves liberals. But Boris Furlan was a liberal too—undoubtedly, by their own definition, a better one than any of them. Yet their words, if they came too late to help undo him (by a "tie-up"?) at his own trial, cannot fail to hurt such future as he may have left and will do their meanest, by misunderstanding if nothing else, to make more difficult or impossible the Yugoslav liberalism for which he labored. The result is fantastic and seems to call for a searching of "liberal" hearts, if not for extended prayer.

P. B.

CONTRIBUTORS

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